

VIETNAM COURIER

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Our Monthly

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JUNE 13, 1973 was the date of the signature of the Joint Communiqué whose main content consisted in a reaffirmation of the validity of some provisions of the January 27, 1973 Paris Agreement which Washington and Saigon had refused to implement. One year has elapsed since then, or 17 months since the signing of the Paris Agreement, and the situation in South Viet Nam has become more and more serious. There is no cease-fire; on the contrary, since mid-May Saigon army forces the size of an army corps have launched operations against the Ben Cat area, about 30 kilometres north of Saigon. Press-ganging has been stepped up: at Rach Gia 300 Buddhist monks who opposed conscription were beaten

up so badly that five of them were killed and 17 wounded. Vast quantities of American arms and munitions have been brought into South Viet Nam despite the prohibition laid down in the Paris Agreement; figures for the period since the signing of the Paris Agreement reveal one million tons of bombs and shells, 1,100 tanks and armoured cars, 800 heavy guns, 200 combat vessels, 700 aircraft including 80 F-5Es, 28 of the still more modern F-5Fs are expected to be sent to Thien in the near future.

Thien's army has engaged in extremely rash acts of war: the DRVN LC-174 transport, which was unloading foodstuffs for the South Vietnamese people, was deliberately sunk on

June 26 at Cua Viet, in the territorial waters of the PRG. It is clear from these facts that Thieu's momentary retreat by restoring on June 7 some privileges and immunities to the PRG and DRVN military delegations was nothing but a manoeuvre aimed at soothing public opinion, chiefly in the US, and trying to create an atmosphere which would induce the US Congress to vote credits for the Saigon administration. When the negotiations resumed, Thieu's delegates obstinately refused to guarantee to the other sides full enjoyment of their privileges and immunities as provided for in the Agreement and in the Paris Joint Communiqué and they did not show any sign of goodwill in the talks. The decision of the PRG to suspend its participation in the session of the Two-Party Joint Military Commission sine die is shown to be completely necessary and must act as a serious warning to Washington and Saigon. In the light of the recent declarations made by American personalities, from Ambassador Graham Martin to Secretary of State Henry Kissinger and Defense Secretary James Schlesinger, any hope of seeing Nixon and Thieu soon come to their senses must be very slight. According to them the US will not leave Nguyen Van Thieu in the lurch, because they have made a "natural commitment" to him, a "moral and political" and even "juridical" commitment stemming from the Paris Agreement itself. The question is how to convince Congress of the neces-

sity of granting to Thieu a huge military and economic aid to the tune of 3.7 billion dollars, according to various American sources, aid which is prohibited by the Paris Agreement, but which would allow the "Nixon doctrine" to be realized and the US Vietnamized war to be prosecuted in the absence of the American troops who have been forced to pull out.

What can the Vietnamese people do in face of the unveiled determination of the US to continue its policy of force in its attempt to impose its neo-colonialism in South Viet Nam?

The means at Washington's disposal are tremendous and we do not underestimate its determination to cling to its position. But the relation of forces one year after the Joint Communiqué has developed in favour of the patriotic forces. The liberated zone, where the attacks of the Saigon troops have been repelled with heavy losses for the invaders, has been built up and has become a pole of attraction for the peasants, formerly forced by American shelling to seek refuge in the towns. The economic crisis in the Saigon-controlled areas has, in fact, made life unbearable for many social classes.

The third force, whose existence is denied, against all evidence, by the Saigon authorities, continues to have its ranks swollen. And while the people's power is becoming

stronger the Thieu regime is being torn by rivalries between various cliques, culminating in endless purges.

In neighbouring Cambodia, the Lon Nol regime is disintegrating more and more quickly, and, despite the wet season, the liberation forces continue to advance and to control large territories.

In Laos, peace has made big strides forward with the unanimous adoption by the National Political Council of Coalition of the political programme presented by Prince Souphanouvong for the building of the Kingdom of Laos into a peaceful, independent, neutral, democratic and prosperous country. The demand by the Lao patriotic forces for the ending of all US military presence in Thailand has found a favourable echo in every neighbouring country as the maintenance in Thailand of American military establishments, bases and personnel is a threat not only to Laos but also to all countries in South East Asia.

Fully conscious of the difficulties ahead, the South Vietnamese patriots and the whole Vietnamese people remain however confident that their objectives, as defined in the Paris Agreement, will be realized.

June 25, 1974

VIET NAM COURIER

DEEP ROOTS

HAVE a good look at it, my son. On the reviewing stand, in the foreground, the head of the government, the ministers and generals. They all are Vietnamese, the police chief too. Only in the background can you see the ambassadors of foreign countries, France, the USA, Britain.

It was in 1952: Washington had already forced Paris to create a "national" government in Viet-Nam to continue the war. And in a text-book on civics prepared for primary schools, one finds clearly displayed this reading — text in which a well-intentioned father shows his son, on the occasion of a public holiday, the great change that had taken place.

Evil's homage to virtue: colonialism which until then has forbidden all allusion to any national feeling whatsoever, now reserves a place of honour for it. And for more than twenty years, the same refrain has been continually repeated; as everything is Vietnamized, why should you hesitate to join that "national" government which has been so generously granted you. Hundreds of billions of dollars have been allocated to support the thesis, but to no avail: the hard-headed Vietnamese people persist in thinking and believing that everything genuinely national is to be found on the other side.

For a president, ministers, generals, however dazzlingly attired they may be, do not make a people, still less a nation. A people, a nation do not identify themselves with some golden uniforms, or with more or less well-organized military and civilian parades, especially when the fight for their existence, for the defence of their identity, reveals — for better or for worse — the virtues and weaknesses of man. Heroes emerge and traitors become unmasked.

If first the NLF and then the PRG of South Viet Nam have succeeded in preventing the colossal US war machinery from smothering them, this is because they have the people behind them with their deep sense of human and national dignity and their indefatigable combativeness. Is there any Vietnamese with the smallest conscience who dares to identify himself with a Nguyen Van Thieu, that former paratrooper in the French expeditionary corps? Is there any Vietnamese

who, even if he has never taken part in any political struggle, would not take boundless pride in being the fellow-countryman of one of those hundreds of thousands of fighters who have defeated the all-powerful USA?

In our time, there is no other test to tell what is genuinely national from what is not: the fierce, persevering, multiform struggle, that the peoples of Asia, Africa, Latin America are waging against imperialism, continues this most distinct, most accurate line of partition, of cleavage, that no manoeuvre can erase. Born from a vast popular and national movement, carrying on the nationwide resistance against French colonialism, the NLF and the PRG of South Viet Nam are now, and forever, the genuine representatives of the South Vietnamese people. The welcome given to the PRG delegates by the representatives of various governments of non-aligned countries at the Algiers Conference showed to what extent international opinion has now become sensitive to this point.

The place given by the PRG to the third component and to the policy of national concord, in contrast with the attitude of Saigon and Washington, also shows to what extent the PRG reflects the aspirations of a people, to what extent it is sure of the people's confidence. And nobody has doubts about its unshakable will to fight against all encroachments on the liberated zone, all violations of the Paris Agreement, all foreign interference or aggression. The will to fight, the capability to resist any aggression, however savage, that will, that force combined with an open-minded, fraternal attitude toward any other peace force, have made the PRG into a reality which is so deeply national and popular that no force in the world can continue to ignore it. The ricefields, the gardens that are now beginning to grow green in the areas still pockmarked with millions of bomb craters, still bearing the traces of the most frightful sprayings of chemicals, these are, so to speak, the symbol of the deep roots of the PRG in the Vietnamese land and in its history. Any attempt to uproot it is doomed to failure.

NGUYEN KHAC VIEN

The PRG and the Liberated Zone of South Viet Nam

The Revolutionary Power

— June 6, 1969: Formation of the Provisional Revolutionary Government of the Republic of South Viet Nam elected by the All-South Viet Nam Congress of Representatives which met from June 6 to June 8, 1969 with the participation of representatives of the National Front for Liberation from all parts of South Viet Nam and of the Alliance of National, Democratic and Peace Forces.

President of the Advisory Council: Lawyer Nguyen Huu Tho.

President of the Government: Architect Huynh Tan Phat.

— Up to now, the system of revolutionary administration has been established from the base to the central level in all 44 prov-

inces, in cities and towns and in more than 230 districts and 2,500 villages. There are 5 representations of the PRG in 5 areas: Mid-Central Viet Nam, South-Central Viet Nam, East-Southern Viet Nam, Mid-Southern Viet Nam and West-Southern Viet Nam.

Achievements in Building the Liberated Zone

Economy :

— Implementation of the agrarian policy: till 1972, the revolutionary administration had distributed to the peasants

1,650,000 hectares of arable land. If the land distributed during the resistance war against the French is included, the peasants now own 2,100,000 hectares of the total 3,500,000 hectares of arable land in South Viet Nam, or 71.7% of the rice-growing acreage.

— In Quang Tri, over 70% of the cultivable land has been restored. The revolutionary administration has helped the people to clear virgin land,



*Digging irrigation canals
(Quang Nam province, Central
Viet Nam).*

reclaim arid fields, build irrigation works and improve farming techniques. It has supplied 200 ploughing-machines, 200 pumps, 2,200 buffaloes and tens of thousands of tons of lime and fertilizer.

In 1973-1974, 400 ha of rice, 500 ha of other crops were added to the cultivated acreage of the Winter 1972 - Spring 1973 crop. A new species of rice was introduced over 25 % of the rice-growing area. The people have contributed 130,000 work-days to transport 84,000 cubic metres of earth for the repair and consolidation of the irrigation system. The tree-planting and afforestation campaign is moving ahead; in the first quarter of 1974, 34,000 young trees were planted.

— In Mid-Central Viet Nam, with the help of the revolutionary administration, the people have repaired the waterways and dams which were destroyed and built new ones. 155 old dams were repaired, 15 new ones built and 5 km of waterways dug. The population of Duc Pho (Quang Ngai) have put back into use 275 water-pumps. Some districts in Gia Lai province have spent 3,800 work-days on improving the irrigation system by digging 7 km of waterways. Dieu Binh village (Kon Tum) has completed a water reservoir with a capacity of tens of thousands of cubic metres and a waterway network 2 km long.

— In South-Central Viet Nam compared with 1973, the cultivated acreage of food crops in 1974 has increased by 30 % and draught power by 40 %.

— A campaign for resettlement has started in the mountain region of Mid-Central Viet Nam. 70 % of the ethnic minorities in West Quang Nam and 50 % in West Khanh Hoa have voluntarily moved down and resettled in lower regions where they engage in agriculture.

— In East-Southern Viet Nam, from January to September 1973,



the revolutionary administration allotted to the peasants 2,500 ha of land. Almost all the rubber-growing areas in the liberated

have joined mutual-aid teams of production. 9,000 such teams have been formed in Quang Tri and Mid-Central Viet Nam alone.

— Workshops in various provinces have turned out or repaired a large number of farm tools for the peasants. In December 1973, Quang Tri inaugurated the "December 20" factory for manufacturing and repairing farm tools.

— Husbandry and fishing: in South-Central Viet Nam, the herd of buffaloes and cows in 1973 was three times bigger than in 1972. In Tra Vinh, some localities had 50 head of cattle for each family. In 1973, Quang Tri caught 820 tons of fish.

— Development of commerce: in Quang Tri many shops have been opened and market sites restored, while Dong Ha market has been completely rebuilt.



zone of Phuoc Binh province have been restored.

— In the Mekong delta a bumper autumn harvest was recorded. The rice yield per hectare varied from 3 to 5 tons.

— In the areas of the ethnic minorities, most of the people

Culture and Education:

— By the beginning of 1973, 1,500 schools with 35,000 pupils had been added to the 1970 figure of 7,100 schools and study groups with nearly 1 million pupils, ranging from alphabet classes to the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd levels of general education. Illiteracy has virtually been wiped out in the liberated zone, and 17 scripts for the Central Highlands ethnic minorities created.

— In Quang Tri, by April 1974, illiteracy had been completely wiped out in all the districts of the plain regions. In the 1973-74 school year 30,000 pupils have been attending schools.

— In West-Southern Viet Nam, 728 more schools and 140 more study groups have been created for over 46,000 pupils of the 1st and 2nd levels.

— In 1973 Binh Phuoc province (East-Southern Viet Nam) had 134 classes with nearly 4,000 pupils and 170 teachers, including 3,000 pupils and 40 teachers from the ethnic minorities.

— Loc Ninh town and Bu Dop district centre (East-Southern Viet Nam) now have 2nd level schools.



— Information and culture: each province is publishing its own news bulletin. Besides 3 big newspapers *Giai Phong* ("Liberation" — Central organ of the Front), *Mien Nam Chien Dau* ("South Viet Nam in Struggle" — The PRG foreign language publication) and *Tien Phong* ("Vanguard" — Central organ of the People's Revolutionary

Party); there are scores of other dailies, magazines, cultural and art reviews. Numerous stories, essays, musical pieces and novels have been published and some of them translated into foreign languages. Painting in the liberated zone has produced 2,500 works. About 300 valuable collections of photos have been distributed, of which the photos "Carrying Ammunition to the Front" and the "Rushing forward to Wipe Out the Enemy" have been awarded golden medals in International Photo Exhibitions. 300 films produced by the Liberation Studio and the Liberation Army Studio have been put on show, of which 34 have won prizes in home competitions and 5 in world competitions. Every province and village has its own amateur artistic ensemble. In all there are now 300 such groups. New ways of life are being instilled and superstitions, gambling, drinking, etc., virtually rooted out.

Health:

— The medical network covers 100% of the liberated villages, including the remotest ones in the mountain region. 70% of the districts have doctors or assistant doctors. Thousands of dispensaries and medical teams have been consolidated and expanded. Each province has a Medical Service in the charge of 4 or 5 doctors.



Teaching the national alphabet to members of the Pa Co ethnic minority in the mountain areas of Quang Tri province (Central Viet Nam)

*A health station in
Quang Tri province*



Within 3 years (1969-71), 3 more general hospitals with relatively modern equipment were opened. Medical schools have trained nearly 1,000 pharmacists, assistant doctors and doctors.

— In Quang Tri there are now 60 hospital beds for every ten thousand people, 1 doctor for every thousand and 1 medical assistant for every 300 people.

— In 1973, the pharmaceutical service of South-Central Viet Nam manufactured tens of millions of drug ampoules and pills of various kinds, together with quantities of traditional medicines made from local recipes.

— In Binh Phuoc province (East-Southern Viet Nam) the provincial hospital has successfully performed difficult surgical operations such as bone grafting, ablation of the spleen, treated poliomyelitis and psychiatric diseases, and done everything possible to rescue the patriots returning from US-Thieu prisons from malignant diseases.



tions (including some UN organizations) have given direct aid to the PRG.

— Up to April 1974, the PRG and the NFL had sent 490 delegations to attend national and world conferences in order to denounce US-Thieu crimes and pay friendly visits to various countries.

— President Nguyen Huu Tho took part in the Summit Conference of Non-Aligned Countries in Algiers (September 5-8, 1973).

— 23 countries and 2 organizations have sent ambassadors and representatives to the liberated zone to present their credentials.

— From September 1972 to April 1974, 98 foreign delegations visited the South Viet Nam liberated zone (including 6 delegations from world organizations and 13 from national organizations).

In September 1973, Premier Fidel Castro of the Cuban Revolutionary Government visited the liberated zone of Quang Tri.

External Relations

— Up to June 14, 1974, over 42 countries had recognized the PRG and established diplomatic relations with it.

On May 22, 1974, the PRG Permanent Representation was established in France.

In Indonesia, an NFL Permanent Representation is maintained.

PRG information services have been set up in 5 countries.

— Over 20 governments and 100 national and world organiza-

LOC DIEN,

A Product of US Neo-Colonialism

The church was built on a lonely hillock at the end of the village; it was linked to the road by a flight of brick stairs. I arrived there on a Sunday morning after Mass. The first to come out of the vaulted building surmounted by a statue of the Virgin Mary were the children. They seemed to have completely forgotten the spiritual world behind them and to be lost in the earthly world, as they ran towards me, shouting when they saw me take out my camera.

A young girl clad in a plum-coloured tunic and white trousers, with a golden cross on a chain around her neck, broke her way through the crowd, and came and asked me in a half northern half southern accent: "Excuse me, will you tell me where you come from?"

I fished my pass out of my pocket and showed it to her;

but she turned away, blushing (I guessed she was illiterate). She led me to the Chairman of the village people's revolutionary committee.

Though many scars of war were apparent Loc Dien still looked wealthy. Life was normal notwithstanding the Saigon guns which were still booming somewhere in the vicinity. The rainy season was on its way and farm work—sowing, harrowing, weeding—was in full swing.

I looked into a maternity-home and saw the white overalls of the nurses and heard babies' cries. In a small inn, some army-men were eating noodles with their bikes leaning against the foot of a mango tree. An itinerant vendor, an old man, walked slowly by, shouting his wares in a hoarse voice: "Salt, sugar for sale, cigarettes!"

At noon, I met the Reverend

Thich Giac Minh of the Phuc Lam pagoda, fasting in the house of Hai Son. Bare-headed and bare-footed in his saffron robe, the austere Buddhist bonze stood immobile near an altar decorated with a pot of flowers and shrouded in the smoke of joss-sticks. After receiving as alms a bowl of rice from Hai Son, he said prayers begging Buddha to bless the donor and silently left for another house.

Lying along Road 13, 6 kilometres from Loc Ninh town, Loc Dien is a newly-built village without a tradition. It was named "Thanh Dien" before liberation day and "Tich Thien Agricultural Settlement" at an earlier date. It was first founded early in 1957, at the time US neo-colonialism began penetrating in South Viet Nam, and is the product of this neo-colonialism.

Its inhabitants have come from all parts of Viet Nam but stem in the main from two origins. The smaller part came from the villages of Thanh Chau and Tan Phong, Duy Xuyen district, Quang Nam province. In 1955, they had parted with their dear ones who were being regrouped in the North, hoping to return home after the general elections for the reunification of the country scheduled to be held two years later. But, only a few days later, the villagers saw Ngo Dinh Diem's men

A Book of Burning Relevance

Saigon : Un régime en question

LES PRISONNIERS POLITIQUES

Editions SUDESTASIE—17, Rue du Cardinal Lemoine, Paris V

400 pages : texts, documents, witnesses

behead, disembowel or slash the faces of about 100 persons to be regrouped and threw them into the water at Vinh Trinh, Phuoc Chi and Thach Bi dams. They themselves were tied up, thrown into lorries and driven to "agricultural settlement" centres. The greater part, who called themselves "Dien's relatives," were Catholics coming from the North, enticed or coerced into "following the Lord southward." They had roamed through the South scraping a scanty living, and had

finally been sent to Tich Thien, then a virgin jungle infested with anopheles mosquitoes and snakes.

These two groups of people, forced to live together in camps surrounded by barbed-wire entanglements, shared the same fate, but had lived for years in two different, not to say opposing, worlds. The enemies of our people wanted to turn Loc Dien into an "out-post," but their attempt, though at times obtained some success, in the end failed.

A "Stranded" Man

"At that time I thought of fleeing," Mr. Nguyen Luong confessed to me.

"That time" was when our troops came and liberated Loc Ninh. A man of 47, Luong had an honest, open face, and when I asked him why he did not run away, he answered me without hesitation: "Not because I did not want to flee but because I could not."

In truth, he had fled the revolution twenty-five years ago and this may be regarded as a success of the deceptive and coercive manoeuvres of the enemy.

A native of Van Phu village (on an islet in the Gianh River), Quang Trach district, Quang Binh province, Mr. Luong was twenty years old when one day, after Mass, he was asked by a priest to join a rural self-defence unit to "defend the Christian faith," in co-operation with the French troops. Ignorant, weak-hearted and a fervent believer, he yielded to the injunctions of his superior. Later, in 1954, after he had been wounded and demobilized, the priest told him: "The Lord has gone South." He doubted that, but the priest followed this up with threats. "You've been co-operating with the French and so you've become an enemy of Viet Minh. It's up to you to decide whether you will go or stay." There seemed no alternative. Like a madman, he

went South with his mother, wife and children, leaving everything in the North.

He was made headman of the Tich Thien agricultural settlement and then chief of the Catholic community there. When, in April 1972, the Loc Ninh military sector was overrun, Division 9 surrendered and Colonel Vinh was taken prisoner, he fled with the Loc Dien civil defence platoon though that unit had not yet been attacked. This time, the puppet troops decamped so quickly that he had no time to take along his family and his scanty belongings with him in his flight. Once, at Hamlet Three, a man from Quang Nam had told him about his brother who had been killed by the US henchmen in 1955, cut up into many parts and exposed to the sun on the sand bank of the Thu Bon river. He remembered that story and was afraid of being killed in the same way as a reprisal and having his body exposed on Road 13.

About one hundred people, including members of the civil guard platoon, mustered on hilltop behind the hamlet. He asked the civil guard chief: "When will helicopters come and take us away?" The fellow snapped: "Even the colonel and major have had to take to their heels, let alone us!" and then he added: "If you cannot run away, commit suicide, but don't let the Viet Cong capture you and cut your throat!"

As he had been injured in one leg during his service under the French, he could not think of running away, neither had he the courage to make an attempt on his life. Soon after, when nobody was around, he slipped into the undergrowth and returned to his house. It was a tense time for him, especially during April and May 1972 when he was living in constant dread of being arrested and murdered. One day, he received a visit from a stranger — a cadre from the district office — to inquire after his health and his living conditions.

"I have something to tell you," he then said.

"What's the matter?" Mr. Luong asked anxiously.

"We want to make you hamlet chief. You have experience in doing this job; besides, being chief of the Catholic community, it is easy for you to talk to your people."

Thus a new life began for Mr. Luong. "The hamlet and village authorities are all old acquaintance," he told me. "My work is so simple: to look after production, civilian defence against enemy bombardment, education and the health of the population."

He kept me for dinner. Besides a bottle of alcohol the meal consisted of pork, fish paste and raw vegetables, including green bananas, a menu much appreciated by Quang Binh people. I begged his mother and his wife and children to join us but they all refused, saying that "women are not allowed to share a meal with men" and I should allow them to take their meal in another room. As I insisted, the old mother came and sat at a distance from the table. After some hesitation, she asked me about the situation of Catholicism at such places as Don Sa, My Hoa, Huong Phuong and Gia Hung, in Quang Binh province. Fortunately, I had lived there for many years and could tell her everything in great detail. Look-

ing pensive, she laid down her bowl of rice and said: "We were foolish then, we were taken in, sir!"

First Meeting with the Liberation Fighters

Mr D., a native of Quang Oai, Son Tay province (North Viet Nam), was another man who had tried to flee in April 1972. Perhaps, of all the families at Loc Dien village, his was the most unfortunate. In 1954, despite the entreaties of his wife, who even threatened to put an end to her life, he was firmly resolved to go South. He had a large family: six boys and two girls. Now, after twenty years of war, only the youngest daughter is left; she was the girl I had met in front of the church when I just arrived at Loc Dien. Of his six sons, four, serving in the puppet army, had died on the battlefield; the fifth, also a puppet soldier, had died from over-drinking and the sixth one was leading a wandering life as a hooligan. Of his daughters, one had left the house in 1967 and never been heard of since. Mr D. had run away because of fear, but also because he wanted to flee from the terrible situation of his family. Made insane by suffering, his wife sat all day long at the foot of a mango tree, calling, one by one, the names of her dead sons and those of her dear ones living in the North. At times, she looked mournfully at her husband as if to say "it is you who are responsible for this desperate situation."

The Loc Ninh military sector was taken by the liberation army in the spring of 1972. D. had only time to take a bundle of clothes he had prepared beforehand, and he fled, wearing only a pair of knee breeches. That night the wind was cold; he undid the bundle to change his clothes, but found that it was his daughter's. He returned home to fetch his own clothes; his daughter gave him half a ball of rice. Astonished, he asked where it came from.

"The Viet Cong — sorry, the Liberation fighters — gave it to me," his daughter replied.

"The Viet Cong have come here, then?"

"They only passed by, but don't call them 'Viet Cong'."

"Did they say anything?"

"They asked us whether we were hungry. I replied 'No', but mother said 'Yes'. So they gave

After taking some sips of alcohol, Mr Luong struck in: "I regret that I am too old and weak to do anything now."

us this rice and told us to remain in the shelter, not to go out for we might get killed by the air-raids."

"Maybe you can stay here," the young girl added, "there is nothing to fear. They look very kind."

Mr D. stayed.

He told me that for last harvest he only reaped thirty *gia* (one *gia* equals about 20kg) as he was not yet quite reassured. With this crop, he reckoned to harvest at least 150 *gia* of paddy, not to mention maize, groundnut and cassava. His daughter, Hoa, is now a member of the guerilla unit of the hamlet and attends a literacy class in the afternoon.

Old V., 70, a churchwarden, hailing from Cam Nuyen, Ha Tinh province (North Viet Nam), was also a "stranded" man. After his wife's death in 1971, he had been living a lonely life. One

gloomy night at the end of that year, he suddenly discovered a comet shooting over the horizon. His friends told him that this was an ill omen, and heralded a period of war.

"The worst that can happen is that the Viet Cong will come and take over," he said. "That doesn't matter much to me. I'll stay to ring the bell and take care of the church."

One day, N., the hamlet chief from his village, came and told him: "All the Northerners who went South are on the Viet Cong list of persons to be sentenced to death and we will all be..." For the last word he expressively tapped his neck with his open hand.

This persuaded Mr V. to decamp, though he was advanced in years. But, his strength failed him and he could not run away. For one month he kept indoors. One day a man came to see him: "Why don't you sweep the church ground?" he asked. "A place of worship should be kept clean, Tomorrow, ring the bell to enliven the village and wake people up."

Since then, old V. had returned to his usual work.

Severance with the Past

Mr Tro, chairman of the revolutionary people's council of Loc Dien village, led me to the construction site of a primary school. The atmosphere was gay: old carpenters busy with their work, young people carrying earth or building foundations, old women splitting bamboo laths or boiling water, and little children running around everywhere.

"This is something new in our village," he said. Afraid that I did not understand him, he explained: "Never before could you have seen Quang Nam people and Catholics 'refugees' from the North sitting or working together. But as you see now they are contributing building materials and working together, and their children are studying in the same school."

"The children did not study together formerly?" I asked.

"No," he said. "In Hamlet Three, well-off families sent their children to private schools in town, the poor ones left their illiterate. In Hamlet Four, children went to a school run by the Catholic sisters."

I asked why a new school had to be built when there was already a primary school in the village. "Yes," the chairman said, "the old school is still there. In 1966 the Saigon authorities gave us building material and money to repair it. But a military post was built between the school and the market, and the school was used more as a shield protecting the post than as an educational institution. No children went to that school."

"Now that the post has been removed, why wasn't the school repaired and put into use?" I asked.

"The people's council had the same idea," Mr Tro said. "But the inhabitants did not agree. They said they hated all things that belonged to the devil; they would rather build a new school for their children."

I think myself that this dislike of the old school is simply a question of sentiment. Nevertheless, it shows one thing: everyone here is wanting to make a very definite break with the past.

NGUYEN SINH

VIET NAM COURIER

STRIKING PROGRESS

of an

AGRICULTURAL CO-OPERATIVE

THIS year, "Binh Da 2," a co-operative of Binh Minh commune, Thanh Oai district, Ha Tay province, harvested 1,050 tons of spring rice, an increase of 400 tons (61.5%) over 1972, one of the best crops so far.

The yield was 6.5 tons per hectare on a total acreage of 162 hectares.

That bumper harvest made it possible for "Binh Da 2" to deliver to the State 83% of the yearly deliveries of paddy (150 out of 180 tons) while 100 more tons were sold by co-op members to the State trade service at market price.

These results were due to the growing on 60% of the planting areas of a new rice strain, H1, of higher yield and greater resistance to unfavourable weather conditions and plant diseases than the old variety *Nong nghiep 8*.

This has been made possible by the re-arrangement of the fields, large-scale irrigation work, the practice of intensive culture — a collectively-owned herd of one thousand pigs supplies most of the organic manure—the mechanization of ploughing which enables the strict observance of the planting schedule and the improvement of managerial work.

In the last-named field, the co-operative has judiciously applied the system of "three-point" contract, which is signed by each work team and fixes:

- the quantity of paddy to be delivered after the harvest;
- the production costs, and
- the number of work-days and work-points.

That managerial measure is taken simultaneously with the establishment of technical norms for each task.

All the above technical and

managerial innovations have been achieved only thanks to the establishment of new socialist relations of production gradually

consolidated on the basis of technical improvement. On this score "Binh Da 2" sets a convincing example.

FACTS AND EVENTS

Resurgence of the Saigon Economy?

WITH the departure of the GIs, who had plenty of greenbacks, for one year now the Saigon economy has been at its last gasp. Inflation, unemployment and the high cost of living are hitting hard on all sections of the population. With his friend and boss Graham Martin, Thieu has been trying to wring more money out of Washington.

However the US Congress grows surly: the 1,500 million credit requested by the Administration in favour of Saigon for 1974 has been cut down to 1,126 million. This will also be the ceiling for 1975, though 1,600 million dollars have been demanded.

In its attempt to revive the Saigon economy, Washington has worked out a formula.

According to the Saigon daily *Dien Tin*, thanks to a generous aid granted by the US a new industry will be started up in Saigon. Factories will be built to turn out... bombs

and ammunition of various kinds. Specifically, it is to be heavy artillery shells and M-16 bullets to begin with, weapons which will proudly bear the inscription "Made in Viet Nam." Thus, in his own way, Thieu is putting into practice the slogan of "self-reliance."

From Saigon it is reported that Thieu has obtained the help of his West German friends for the installation of a modern printing-house for the making of bank-notes.

Munitions and bank-notes, produced at will... This is all that is needed to strengthen Saigon economy!

Up to now only one branch is being overemployed and is offering jobs: this is, according to a Saigon daily, the prison administration.

With these three industries: armaments, bank-notes and prisons, the Saigon economy will know a new boom.

The only loser: peace!

For more than ten years, successive administrations in Thailand have proved effective accomplices of the US in its aggressive war against the countries of Indochina.

They have authorized the US to use Thailand as an air base for its aircraft in attacks against North Viet Nam, Laos and Cambodia and as a supply-base for the Thai and Laotian rightist troops in Laos and the reactionary forces in Cambodia. On American orders, they sent 26 combat battalions to Laos and one division to South Viet Nam to participate directly in the aggressive war beside the US and puppet troops. By using Thai territory as a base for attacks and bombing raids against Laos, the US has flagrantly violated Article 2 (j) of the Declaration of the Neutrality of Laos solemnly signed by the US, Thailand and other countries, which stipulates: "They [the signatories] will not use the territory of any country, including their own, for interference in the internal affairs of the Kingdom of Laos."

The role of Thailand in the US war in Indochina is very important. *Le Monde diplomatique* of February 1974 wrote: "Over more than ten years, this country has played the role of the 'great American rear base' in the Indochina conflict. Without such an important aircraft-carrier and such an important rear base, the United States would no doubt have been more reluctant to get involved so deeply in the conflict."

Things are now exactly the same as before.

After the signing of the Paris Agreement on Viet Nam and the Vientiane Agreement on Laos, the US has continued using Thailand as a base in its attempt to hamper the restoration of peace in these two countries.

It has transferred the US Air Command from Saigon to Nakhorn Phanom where it has set up the Joint Casualty Research Centre (JCRC) and the US Support Activities Group (USSAG). The JCRC is in fact a centre to direct espionage activities in Indochina, and the USSAG is often publicized by the USA as

a deterrent force in Southeast Asia aimed at the Indochinese countries. The USSAG has direct communications with Saigon, Phnom Penh, Vientiane, SAC (Strategic Air Command) and even with the White House. Now it has at its disposal 600 aircraft and 6,000 to 6,500 pilots and it is equipped with two IBM-360 computers, a radar system and a DART network which can receive and analyse intelligence reports from sensors dropped by the US on all the Indochinese battlefields (*Far Eastern Economic Review*, July 2, 1973).

The US continues to use the military port of Sattahip for the shipment of weapons to the Lon

spies and commandos into her liberated zone.

Thus, both the US and Thailand have seriously violated Article 20 of the January 27, 1973 Paris Agreement and Article 8 of the March 1973 Act of the International Conference on Viet Nam and the February 21, 1973 Vientiane Agreement on Laos.

The US occupation of Thailand and its use of Thai territory as a springboard to attack the Indochinese countries suggest that Thailand is in danger of being turned into a hotbed of war in Southeast Asia. In the language of the deputy provincial chief of Nakhorn Phanom, this is "a big thorn thrust into the flesh" of Thailand.



Nol troops in Phnom Penh and Nam Phong base for the training of commandos to be sent to Cambodia.

After the restoration of peace in Laos, the US has transferred a number of its bases, formerly situated far inland, to areas close to the Thailand-Laos frontier along the Mekong river bank. Every day, American aircraft taking off from Thailand fly reconnaissance flights over the airspace of Laos and drop

The Thai people have been aware of this danger for a long time and have tried to resist it. That was why in August 1973, the Bangkok authorities had to negotiate with the US: the August 24, 1973 US-Thailand Joint Communiqué stipulated that in September 1973, the US would withdraw from Thailand 3,550 military personnel and 100 aircraft. This is nothing compared with the number of US troops and aircraft recently transferred from South Viet Nam, not to speak of the 45,000 troops and 600 aircraft already based in Thailand. Moreover, after the August 17, 1973 statement of Thai Prime Minister Thanom Kittikachorn, this is a conditional withdrawal to be carried out in several phases related to security requirements in Southeast Asia. Also in this statement Thanom Kittikachorn said: "On account of the unstable situation in Cambodia and the other Indochinese countries, we think it necessary to keep B-52 bombers here as a deterrent." On August 28, 1973, he repeated that "The withdrawal of US troops from Thailand may take years," and on October 10, 1973: "I don't

think that all the US troops should withdraw from Thailand."

After the overthrow of the Thanom-Prapas clique and the coming into power of the Thammasak government, the negotiations on the withdrawal of US troops from Thailand were called off.

Dawe Chullasapaya, Thai Defence Minister in the new government, declared: "The US troops will withdraw only when their activities in Thailand prove to be no longer necessary" (*UPI*, Oct. 24, 1973).

Meanwhile, US activities show its intention to make a long stay in Thailand: it has raised its aid to Thailand to a billion dollars and given another 650 million dollars for the construction of military projects. The CIA has signed a contract with Air America valued at 41.4 million dollars (twice the previous figure) for continuous reconnaissance flights and dropping leaflets and commandos on the guerilla zones in Thailand. In the fiscal year 1973-1974, the US agreed to grant Thailand an additional aid of 16.2 million dollars to be spent on the Public Security Programme (in fact a pacification programme). Together with Japan, it studied the use of nuclear power for digging a canal through the Kra isthmus, so as to shorten the route from the Pacific to the Indian Ocean to be used by the 7th Fleet. In late December 1973, the American company Northrop signed with the Thai government an agreement on the building of a new airfield on the outskirts of Bangkok. On May 3, 1974, 26 American B-52 strategic bombers taking off from Guam landed on Utapao airfield on the pretext of "avoiding storms." But in fact, the US simply wanted to probe the reaction of Thai public opinion. If nothing happened, these aircraft would be left in Thailand for a long time as a deterrent.

At that time, the Thai people were reacting strongly against the CIA. So, to appease them, on January 2, 1974 the US Department of Defense resorted to the trick of withdrawing 3,700 more troops. But according to *UPI* (January 3, 1974) this time not a single bomber or fighter was withdrawn and *AP* (January 3, 1974) commented that after

this withdrawal, American troops in Thailand still numbered 35,000. The *Los Angeles Times* of March 4, 1974 disclosed that the Utapao-Sattahip base complex would remain indefinitely in US hands whether peace was restored in Indochina or not.

Of course, the Thai people were not to be fooled by the new American trick. Even in the Thai Parliament, many MPs



questioned the Thammasak government on the US military presence in Thailand. On February 15, 1974, the Thai Deputy Prime Minister had to promise that he would review all the agreements signed with the US on the basis of equality, equity, and respect for national sovereignty.

The March 29, 1974 US-Thailand joint communiqué was issued in such circumstances. But this is only another manoeuvre to calm down public opinion. According to the communiqué, the US will withdraw 10,000 more troops by the end of 1974. But at the same time it reaffirms that the US will maintain a military force in Thailand indefinitely as a deterrent.

Reflecting popular indignation, the May 23, 1974 session of the Thai Parliament agreed to discuss a bill suggested by ex-Foreign Minister Thanat Khoman, which made it illegal for foreign troops to be introduced into Thailand or for troops already stationed in the country to prolong their service there without the authorization of Parliament.

When the first Thammasak government was overthrown on May 22, 1974, a socialist front consisting of nine parties declared that it would support Mr Thammasak in forming a new government on condition that he worked to eliminate the influence of foreign countries, especially the US, and dismantle US military bases in Thailand (*AFP*, May 26, 1974).

Many American politicians also believe that US troops should be withdrawn from Thailand and Southeast Asia. According to *AP* (May 3, 1974), Robert Nix, President of the US House Asian and Pacific Sub-Committee, held that it was time to withdraw US troops from Asia. In his opinion, the greatest danger to peace and US security was the presence in Thailand of 33,000 US paratroops entrusted with the task of defending Nguyen Van Thieu's government in South Viet Nam.

The *Newsweek* of February 18, 1974 disclosed that, when he was Defense Secretary, Melvin Laird was also in favour of withdrawing all US troops from Thailand once the Paris Agreement was signed. But Nixon wished to keep 25,000 US troops in Thailand for a long time, claiming that the US still had the obligation to give air support to South Viet Nam.

No one in Southeast Asia is threatening the security of the USA or Thailand. In maintaining its troops and military bases in Thailand, the only aim of the US is to carry out its neo-colonialist policy in Southeast Asia, to protect the puppet administrations in Cambodia and South Viet Nam and the pro-US reactionaries in Laos. On their part, the Thai people are well aware that, so long as US troops remain in Thailand, there is a danger of war hanging over their heads, while their life will be insecure and their fine traditions will be trampled upon.

The US must end its military presence in Thailand. This is an imperative and just demand for the preservation of peace and national independence in this area.

KY SON

Phnom Penh:

When the US Ambassador Sets Up the New Puppet Cabinet

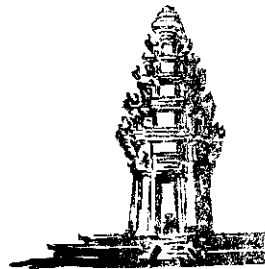
MILITARY setbacks, economic difficulties, and the movement of intellectuals and school and college students in Phnom Penh against the draft and the high cost of living — which on June 4 caused the death of Keo Sang Kim, minister of education, and his assistant Thach Chea in a clash between the students and the police — all these have landed the Phnom Penh administration in another serious crisis.

Not knowing which way to turn, Lon Nol, on the one hand, cracks down savagely on the protesters and on the other, sacks the generals whom he holds responsible for the defeats on the battlefields. The internal contradictions between the various cliques (those of Lon Nol, Sirik Matak and Cheng Heng) are growing deeper and deeper. Within a few days, Vice-Premier Op Kim Ang and seven ministers and two vice-ministers in the Long Boret Cabinet tendered their resignations. Although, in his capacity as Head of State, Lon Nol requested them to reconsider their resignations, they expressed their determination not to co-operate with Lon Nol and Long Boret. This affair ended with the resignation of the whole cabinet.

But the man most affected by that situation is Nixon because, according to *Reuter* (June 11, 1974), American officials have made it clear that any cabinet reshuffle may weaken the position of the Khmer Republic and the efforts of the Nixon administration to convince the US Congress to approve aid grants to Cambodia.

Washington at once commanded John Gunther Dean, the US Ambassador in Phnom Penh, to brandish his magic wand and put some order into the puppet apparatus. As a result, on June 17, 1974 a new government headed by Long Boret was formed,

with sixteen members in which Lon Nol's Social Republican Party grabbed the biggest number of seats. Pan Sothi, the Party Secretary-General, doubles the functions of First Vice-Premier and Minister of Education (to cope with the seething students' movement). Cheng Heng's clique got two portfolios. Sirik Matak's Republican Party not only



refrained from taking part in the new cabinet in protest against Lon Nol's Party which had got hold of 126 seats in the Parliament, but also threatened to expel any of its members who co-operated with Lon Nol (*Reuter*, June 16, 1974).

More than ever, the Americans are behaving openly as the bosses in Phnom Penh. According to *AP* of June 14, 1974, John G. Dean has been meeting Long Boret almost every day ever since the crisis broke out, and the fact that Long Boret has been chosen as Premier shows that he has secured the staunch support of the American ambassador.

John G. Dean may rest content for the time being. However, the contradictions between the various cliques in Phnom Penh will not decrease as the new Cabinet is composed almost solely of members of Lon Nol's Party. As for the population living under the puppets' control, a change of government does not make any difference to them, for anyway every new policy "is always decided by US Ambassador John G. Dean" (*AP*, June 17, 1974).

LAOS: A First Balance-Sheet

SIXTY days have elapsed since the formation in Laos of the National Political Council of Coalition (NPCC) and the Provisional Government of National Union (PGNU) on April 5, 1974.

These two organs of power, the highest in Laos, working in the two cities of Vientiane and Luang Prabang now essentially neutralized, have carried out many tasks full of significance.

The NPCC has held its first session which approved its own statutes, passed temporary regulations on the guarantee of democratic freedoms to the population and drew up a political program for the building of the Kingdom of Laos into a peaceful, independent, neutral, democratic, unified and prosperous country. In his message sent on May

28, 1974 to Prince Souphanouvong, Chairman of the NPCC, King Sri Savang Vatthana pointed out: "All the decisions taken by the National Political Council of Coalition are aimed at bringing all the Lao together and creating an atmosphere of equality, a consciousness of their responsibility for all Lao citizens throughout the land of Laos. In a word, they are giving back the same duties and the same rights to all the Lao people."

The PGNU, for its part, has unanimously approved a 10-point programme of action to strengthen the administrative apparatus so that it should be equal to the new situation and the new task and agreed to oppose the ultra-rightist reactionaries in their attempt to revive the so-called "Vientiane National Assembly," a manoeuvre to

hinder the activities and oppose the role of the NPCC and PGNU.

The Central Joint Commission for the Implementation of the Vientiane Agreement, the third body of coalition, has moved ahead with the neutralization of Vientiane and Luang Prabang and agreed to set up mobile joint teams with the task of planting boundary-markers as a step to a lasting cease-fire.

Nevertheless, apart from these positive achievements, the situation in Laos is not yet free from the complications created by US policy, the activities of the ultra-rightist and the lack of goodwill on the part of the Vientiane side:

— The cease-fire has not been fully implemented. The planting of temporary cease-fire markers especially in disputed zones is still being dragged out. The Vientiane armed forces are still encroaching upon the territories under the patriotic forces' control, leading to an unstable situation along some fronts such as Sebangphay, Hinboun, Pak Ou, Pak Song.

— Many of the provisions dealing with the neutralization of Vientiane and Luang Prabang have not been fully respected: thousands of Vientiane troops, in addition to the number allowed, have been scattered in government offices, and infiltrated among the civilian population so as to continue their occupation of these two cities in a clandestine fashion. Heavy guns, armoured troop-carriers and T-28 planes belonging to the Vientiane side are still remaining in and around these cities. Their aircraft continue to fly reconnaissance missions and to threaten the patriotic forces' regrouping centres.

— The "Special Forces" set up, equipped, trained and commanded by the Americans, an important manifestation of the US involvement in Laos, have not been disbanded; on the contrary they have been strengthened and reinforced and are still being used for operations of encroachment, harassment and sabotage against the liberated areas. Democratic liberties have not yet been guaranteed to the people who are not free to

move about. The overwhelming majority of the people coerced to take refuge during the war are not being helped to return to their home villages, the "refugee camps" are still in existence.

— Though the US and Thailand declare that they have withdrawn their troops and military advisers from Laos, many American officers are to be seen at the US Embassy and Consulates and in such organs as USIS and USAID, and they continue to take command of military operations in Laos. Between May 1 and 21, 1974 alone, American aircraft violated the airspace of the liberated zone 68 times along Road 9 and Muong Phin, Chepone (Savan-

nakhet). With regard to Thailand on June 5 and 7, 1974, Thai troops many times violated Lao territorial waters on the Mekong river and chased or prevented civilians from moving to and fro across the border.

— On the other bank of the Mekong river, the Americans are resolved to maintain the US armed forces in Thailand as a "deterrent" force against the Indochinese countries and to build military bases near the Laos-Thailand border, thus directly threatening the independence, peace and neutrality of Laos.

The Lao patriotic forces, together with all the Lao people who stand for peace, neutrality and national concord, will remain constantly vigilant.

The American Peace Forces Continue the Struggle

THE anti-war movement, which the Nixon administration thought it could stamp out after January 27, 1973, still goes on, drawing support from various sections of the American people. The most recent activity of the fighters in this movement was an effort to persuade the American Congressmen to prevent the Nixon administration from increasing aid to Thieu.

This action was carried out by the "Indochina Peace Campaign" (IPC) and the "Coalition to Stop Funding the War." Members of these organizations distributed leaflets, bulletins and periodicals and used slides to acquaint the American people with the provisions of the Paris Agreement on Viet Nam, and to compare the serious violations of this Agreement by the American authorities and the Thieu administration, with the correct attitude of the PRG and DRVN towards its implementation. They held many teach-ins on the "war after the war" and attended hearings in various US Senate and House Committees where they urged the US Congress to turn down President Nixon's request for increased credits to enable him to continue the Viet Nam war. They organized people

to write to the Congressmen asking them to oppose the Nixon administration's aid to Thieu's police and prisons and support the Indochina Peace Pledge by concrete acts, that is by voting against the US military involvement in Indochina, stopping US police aid to Thieu and encouraging a political solution to the Viet Nam problem in accordance with the Paris Agreement.

In February Jane Fonda and Tom Hayden, both of them IPC representatives, contacted about 50 Congressmen in Washington and held many teach-ins among the Congressmen's aides. They launched a campaign to send petitions to the Congressmen. The results proved satisfactory for many Congressmen not only supported the IPC viewpoint, but urged their colleagues to do the same.

As a result, the last two votes at the US House of Representatives and Senate were not favourable to the additional aid to Nguyen Van Thieu, a testimony to the success of the US peace forces in a most difficult task they have undertaken since the signing of the Paris Agreement on Viet Nam.

The Vietnamese people wholeheartedly thank the American peace fighters and wish them still greater successes.

Letter from HANOI

SO we spent our summer holidays at the seaside, at Tra Co, a beautiful beach, just on the Chinese border. From Hong Gai, a coal-mining town completely destroyed by the US Air Force, to Tra Co, the road runs along Halong Bay, twisting and turning in the midst of wonderful scenery. To travel 350 km by bus with some forty persons from our office, children included, in the present conditions while our roads and bridges have hardly been rebuilt after the war of destruction was quite an eventful journey: a week spent at the hotel — sharing the same sleeping accommodation and dining-hall — allowing oneself to live without any other daily care than how to stay as long as possible in the sea, at a time when the war has not yet ceased in the South and in the North reconstruction work is in full swing, for many this too was a wonderful holiday.

But I would not have told you all that if Mrs Lang had not been travelling with us. Mrs Lang is the charwoman who works every-day at the Viet Nam Courier, doing the cleaning, serving tea, washing window-panes. A peasant from Nam Ha, she came to Hanoi and, a year ago, she lost her husband. At present she is living with her two children, a 9th-form seventeen-year-old boy and a fourteen-year-old girl who is in the 6th form. She can hardly make both ends meet, but this year she made up her mind: she must take a holiday. The trip is paid for by the State, and she pays the hotel charges out of her savings.

During the whole journey she was all eyes and ears. Never had she seen so many things, the coal-

mines, the Bay of Halong, the ports, the sea-going junks. Sitting by the side of the director of our office and his wife, she asked them one question after another about everything she saw. Everything was new to her — in her village, she had known nothing but the transplanting and reaping of rice plants; in Hanoi, back from work, she hardly had time to go shopping and do the cooking, for she wanted at all costs to allow her two children to do advanced studies.

I myself had already been to both Halong Bay and Tra Co. Therefore I was a bit blasé at the beginning, throwing only an absent-minded glance at the landscape. But little by little, the interest and passion with which Mrs Lang was looking at everything got the better of me, and finally I was making the trip with the eyes of a child who is setting foot on a foreign land for the first time. The fact that a charwoman takes her holidays at the seaside, that she sits by the side of her director during the whole journey, shares the same dormitory and dining-hall with the director's family, all this is quite new.

In her youth Mrs Lang had known conceited, impersonal notables and mandarins. She would never have dared to think of sitting by the side of one of these personalities, eating at the same table with them or sleeping in the same room. Yet, in comparison with those notables and provincial man-



darins of bygone days, our director would have been their superior by at least some grades, and even these notables and mandarins themselves would not have dared to sit, as Mrs Lang did, without ceremony, by the side of such a high-ranking official.

How much things have changed! many officials of the old regime could say with a deep sigh. As for me, after having made that trip, I understand a little better what a revolution means.

NGUYEN PHONG VIEN

VIET NAM COURIER

HAIPHONG. Summer 1972...

In the streets leading to the port, formerly so busy till the late evening, there was virtually complete silence. Not a living soul could be seen; one could hear the rustle of a falling dead leaf. On the water, bulging tramps were lying lifelessly, with all their multi-coloured marking-lights on, motionless cranes pointed their useless arms toward the sky, frozen in an attitude of desolation; and the "tortoises" were sleeping in the shade of the flame trees, their wheels almost buried under the lush grass.

Western mass media were giving lists of the various types of mines used by the US: magnetic mines, ultra-sound mines, pressure mines, tele-guided mines, and "smart" mines that obey their masters' fingers and eyes, so to speak. The American press put a whole series of questions which were both sounding-balloons and veiled threats: "Could the blockade slow down the Communists' attack?" "Will the mining soften Hanoi's stand at the Paris talks?" "Will the blockade put an end to the war on Nixon's terms?"

* * *

In the meantime, specialists in mines and mine-sweeping were meeting at the headquarters of our Navy. The High Command's order was strict: the enemy blockade must be broken. Day and night different projects were being studied. Technicians and engineers went to sea time and again to get to the minefield: they dropped plastic charges to make them explode; they even dived down to study the moored mines. They were present on our planes which dropped bombs to destroy enemy mines... In brief, all means available and all kinds of operations, even the most dangerous ones, were tried to find out adequate solutions.

After many vicissitudes and repeated trials, two projects were retained and studied in depth. They were later verified, completed and perfected. Once they were adopted, the needed materials were at once mass-produced at the N.46 workshops.

The first mine-sweeping apparatus made after the new model was completed on the very day when the N.46 was heavily bombed by the US Air Force—without great damage, fortunately. The vessel bearing the number 150 had the honour of undertaking the first trials.

arise at any moment. Under that apparently harmless and indifferent surface, mines of all types were cunningly lying in wait. Some will explode when a vessel of any size is passing by: others are designed for big preys only and will leave alone the smaller ones, even if these climb over their backs. Still others are asleep during a specified time—a score of days for example—then wake up and come into activity: they may explode immediately against the objective for which they are designed, or they may only "count" the vessels to explode

Those Who Defeated the BLOCKADE

Let us listen to the correspondent of the *People's Army* newspaper who was on board the vessel:

"Our boat arrived at the minefield. Tiny, luminous signal buoys, laid in the afternoon by other units to mark the area to be explored, danced like will-o'-the-wisps on the waves about thirty metres from our vessel. On the deck, the sailors at their posts were waiting in a tense atmosphere. In the distance, the light-houses—these eyes of the sea—were winking with careless regularity. The moon was rising above the horizon, lighting up the crests of the waves. I thought with anxiety of the dangers that might

only after a specified number of passages. It was quite possible that one of those mines, lurking under the depth of water, would send us into the air at the next minute. And it was not unlikely that we would have to engage in a hard fight against enemy planes that might spot us... Unconsciously, I buttoned up my life-jacket. And I caught myself longing to see a column of water spurt up at some distance from our boat, to hear the cheers of the crew which would free me from this anxiety...

"The 150 was pursuing its course. It had made three passages over the minefield. Suddenly, flashes of lightning ran across

the sky: flares. On the side of Haiphong and Quang Ninh, the A.A. guns opened fire at once: long red streaks wove a thick iron network around invisible enemy aircraft. During long minutes a whole stretch of the sea was brightly lit up. Then the gunfire stopped and the flares died out. The sea and the sky were again quiet under the pale moonlight. The 150 turned back. Suddenly a column of water, about twenty metres high, rose up before us; a few seconds later billow hove our boat almost upright and fine, cold drops of water sprinkled on us... Every one uttered loud cheers which drowned the roar of the waves...

"The new apparatus had turned out to be effective. We returned with the feeling that a decisive victory had been won."

The success was largely due to the X.46, the "cradle" where all the means for detecting and destroying sea mines were made. It was a long path strewn with innumerable difficulties. US air attacks were more and more violent; everything was lacking. Yet workers, technicians and engineers stuck stubbornly to their work. The fitter became welder to speed up the finishing of the parts. The engineer took his bicycle and went to fetch the necessary materials. The workshop manager spent all the night with his workers and made do with a packet of dry biscuits for dinner... Little by little, labour organization was improved and production work was gradually "put into orbit." The success of the first apparatus turned out by the workshop gave new impetus to the X.46.

When I came to congratulate him on the success, foreman Chinh showed me some improvements in the apparatus:

"You see," he said, "this enables us to cut down the personnel on board and lighten the sailors' work."

Then he took me to a dry dock where a boat of a few dozen tons was lying: welders and mechanics were busy fitting it with a new, more powerful apparatus, devised by engineer Vinh.

"This is the H.M.," Chinh explained. "It was used for testing a new model and was hit by a mine: there was no heavy damage and no human losses, fortunately. But this experience was very useful: it has enabled us to improve our boats and their equipment as well as their system of protection."

He introduced me to Nguyen Trong Bich, the technician who had conceived the first prototype.

"What made me become involved in this research?" Bich repeated my question to answer

clusive... It was a great success, a success of our whole collectivity..."

This last phrase was neither a figure of speech nor a polite formula. It was the reality. I had attended many meetings of workers and technicians: they discussed various methods to solve production problems, to overcome difficulties that arose at every moment. Those discussions were at times heated, but always very fruitful...

Yes, it must be said that the success of the X.46 had been an outstanding achievement: the realization of the design adopted had been a task beyond its capabilities, in the difficult conditions of a merciless air war. Later on, it continued to turn out other apparatuses, more powerful and



it immediately: "Once, a magnetic mine sank a ferry-boat at A. Dozens of people were killed and ever since, I used to ask myself if there was any means to destroy those perfidious things laid by the enemy in our rivers and ports. I began to imagine all sorts of apparatuses and to draw innumerable sketches. The engineer H. in our workshops, comrade Tan and comrade Que of the Polytechnic College gave me valuable assistance and helped me gradually to improve my designs. Finally the HDL-9 was ready and the trials were con-

more efficacious, which made an important contribution towards breaking the blockade by which the enemy tried to stifle us...

But there were other people as well, more numerous and anonymous, so to speak, who took part in the battle against the mines. They played a more obscure role which was nonetheless indispensable. They were the "spotters"; with the help of makeshift means as well as sophisticated devices, they scrutinized the sky, counted the mines dropped, marked the

falling spots, delimited the minefields, etc.

I met some of them on a drizzling afternoon. It was at the No. 1 watching-post. We were just chatting when a jet plane roared past. Someone cried out: "The mines!" My eyes followed the flashing trajectory of the enemy plane which dashed toward Do Son... From its silvery silhouette, two small dirty-grey parachutes fell out with shiny things dangling from their ends. A moment later, another jet came from the direction of Quang Ninh, crossed the horizon then disappeared.

There was a brisk discussion at the post. One said that 10 mines had been dropped; another said 18. Each falling spot was carefully debated. For my part, I had only noticed the two mines that fell nearest to us, but if they had asked me, I would have been at a loss to tell where they had fallen. Over that immense stretch of water, how could they fix an invisible point amidst the waves that all looked the same? But it seemed that this did not worry our spotters at all, who spoke about co-ordinates and guiding-points with animation and understood each other perfectly...

And they were not the only ones in that area. At some distance from there, stood another post with queer name: "the Temple of the Three Girls." They were there young girls from the militia unit of the Sea Navigation Department. One of them — Vay — with a K.44 automatic rifle by her side, told me what had just occurred.

"It was my turn to watch," she began. "As soon as I heard the noise of jet engines, I rushed toward the orientation table. First, four aircraft came from the sea, then made for Do Son. Then another squadron came from the mainland and dropped mines. I immediately pinpointed the falling spots on the orientation table. When everything had ended, I sent my report to the Navy

officer in charge of the sector: he will compare the different co-ordinates supplied by our watching-posts and draw the necessary conclusions..."

Then she added, laughing, "You know, it is now almost routine work. But at first it was frightening. On the first day, we had two air raids. You see those craters over there, don't you? It's their traces... But what we really dreaded was the solitude of the place, especially at night when one could hear only the roar of the waves, the rustle of fir trees and when every fire-fly aroused fantastic hallucinations... But all that is a thing of the past..., isn't it?"

I was also told about a fisherman of the local militia. Lieutenant Hung lavishly praised him. "A true son of the sea, upon my word! It was as if he remembered every hollow of the waves. You know, on a pitch-dark night, in bad weather, without a compass, without a sea map, even without a star to take one's bearings, he led us to a place four to five hours from the coast in a boat. And this at a stretch, without useless detours."

I met him, that "sea eagle" in H. village of A. district. His name was Nguyen Van Tinh, a tall man, with gentle, thoughtful eyes. It was he who volunteered, together with the vice-chairman of the fishermen's co-operative, to lead the first boat out to sea after the enemy mining began. It so happened that, during the fishing, an enemy plane came and dropped mines a few hundred metres from the boat. Tinh marked the falling spots and reported them to the watching-post number 34 when returning to the shore. The next day, he took a team of sea police to delimitate the dangerous area. An enemy mine exploded quite near the boat, damaged its hull and flooded it with muddy water... Tinh and his fellows were all but drowned that time. But he had found his

"vocation": the data he supplied proved to be most accurate...

Day after day, the number of mines destroyed increased steadily. Within a short time, the mine-sweeping operation became a matter of routine, certainly dangerous but no longer a secret, even for the fishing-boats which were equipped with appropriate devices. A wide channel was opened to navigation. The boats 150, 152, 412, etc., started off for a last operation. By midnight, the 152 had exploded 7 mines, another had done 5, and still another 4... One of the boats was slightly hit. Some men were thrown into the sea, but they were immediately rescued and attended to.

Finally, the 412 again went to sea, with the task of checking the newly cleared route. When it arrived at the terminal point of the voyage, an explosion of joy broke out: loud cheers drowned the noise of the engines and waves. The 412 was welcomed enthusiastically by the fishing-boats which had been immobilized there since the blockade began. Its crew was offered the best and biggest fish. The triumphal return started. The 412 took the lead of the convoy heading for the port. Near the end, just when they were about to part company, all the boats sounded their sirens to greet the victory: we had won the battle of the mines, the enemy blockade had been broken.

After the signing of the Paris Agreement, in accordance with the provisions agreed on by both sides, the United States sent its men to Haiphong with ultra-modern means to deactivate and destroy the mines they had laid. US helicopters were damaged or sunk, American sailors were drowned, but after long months of "work," they could explode only a miserable three mines.

TU DUONG

WHITHER SOUTH VIET NAM?

The following article by Nguyen Ngoc Lan appeared in the October, 1973 number of the magazine Doi Dien (Confrontation) published in Saigon. Although it is more than six months old, we find it worth republishing because it still retains all its topical interest.

Our notes are in square brackets

IN the oppressive atmosphere we are living marked by widespread famine and imprisonment alongside political

rottenness, is there anyone who can help asking the question: "Where are we going?"

peaceful construction together, they too can only start from the Paris Agreement, that is from what was agreed between the two parties who have violently opposed each other.

On the basis of the Paris Agreement

SINCE January 27, 1973, no correct political path can exist for South Viet Nam which fails to take the Paris Agreement as its basis.

The objective value of the Paris Agreement as a basis is not just because of the four signatures that have been solemnly put under it nor because of the twelve signatures affixed in an even more solemn way to the Act of the International Conference that guaranteed it. It is because it represents a victory of the entire Vietnamese people, as Saigon itself had to recognize. In fact, Article 1 of the Agreement stipulates that "The United States and all other countries respect the independence, sovereignty, unity, and territorial integrity of Viet Nam as recognized by the 1954 Geneva Agreements on Viet Nam." The Agreement also provides for the total withdrawal of US troops.

The Paris Agreement is a basis also because it is a high point in the history of this nation, from which we can look back at the road along which the nation has travelled and see that the course of future history has been set.

One of the parties may have felt giddy standing on this high point, because all along this road it has opposed itself to the course of history or at the best stayed on its margin. But this is another story. Anyway, the Paris Agreement has become the ultimate legal basis of South Viet Nam in the eyes of the other countries as well as in the relations be-

tween the Vietnamese themselves. If other countries, whatever their tendencies, want to have a say in the South Viet Nam question or play some part in the affairs of South Viet Nam there is only one common language which they can speak among themselves and with the South Vietnamese parties: that is the Paris Agreement. As for the people of South Viet Nam, if they want to achieve genuine national concord and reconciliation and engage in

The Fundamental Game of Chess

RIGHT in the first days after the publication of the Paris Agreement, thought it was still hard to predict how it would be implemented and how long it would take to bring about the results envisaged in the Agreement, one could, nevertheless, recognize with relative ease some of the fundamental game of chess involved.

Both the two South Vietnamese parties have affixed their signatures to the Paris Agreement, but it is evident that one of them [the Saigon administration] did it only reluctantly while the other [the PRG] signed with pleasure. One still remembers that one side [the Thieu administration, three months before, in a lengthy speech marked by colonialist soldier's eloquence, blared out a "historic" statement: "If some day, unfortunately, the cease-fire does come about... (1)"] After that, up until today, it has refused to authorize any publishing house

to publish the Paris Agreement in full.

Meanwhile, the other side [the PRG] right from the outset has taken great pains to read again and again over the radio the full text of the Agreement without any comment. Here in Saigon, every citizen who makes good use of his radio-set sees who has enabled him to have access to the content of the Agreement. And which side is anxious to make its cadres, as well as the ordinary people in the areas under its control, make a thorough study of the Paris Agreement is a thing known to all.

There are good reasons for the difference between these two attitudes. For instance:

a) Everything in the Agreement from its content to its form and even each Vietnamese formulation in it, is the work of Mr Le Duc Tho, representative of North

Viet Nam. To say that the DRVN government is not the Republic of South Viet Nam is bad rhetoric because after all Mr. Le Duc Tho is a Vietnamese, closer to Mr. Nguyen Huu Tho than to the other side. As to saying that the other side had its interests defended by Kissinger, that's really fantastic.

b) The Agreement leads to the most natural of all things because, as clearly stated in its title and purpose, it is to end the war and restore peace, at least on the legal plane. Such an agreement is naturally unacceptable to a government which, by its origins and nature, is nothing more than a springboard for the imperialists to jump into Viet Nam and oppose the Vietnamese people. Here is another historic declaration worth recalling [of Thieu]: "When peace returns, I'll leave." Exactly so, because only in the war can these people have something to live on and find their *raison d'être*. In fact, only six months after the cease-fire took effect, the population had to witness the painful sight of economic collapse and the threat of famine. Paradoxes are not rare in the world. Their regime thrives in war time and goes bankrupt in peace time.

c) Because there is an agreement, the other party had to refrain from calling one party a "puppet," but in return, the latter had to recognize its opponent as a real entity. There is no point issuing long statements of non-recognition, or contending, as General Ky once did, that "reality is not yet an entity." As to trying to shut one's eyes before this reality by signing on a separate page alongside the US, this is a child's game that can deceive nobody. The political reality continues its irresistible march toward becoming an entity. As a matter of fact, less than a month later, at the end of the Act of the International Conference on Viet Nam, the same Foreign Minister, Mr. Tran Van Lam, no longer insisted on signing on a separate page alongside the American delegate, but had to accept the inevitable alphabetical order, that is to say, he agreed to sign at any part of the agreement. He was the last to put his signature on the document, a fair distance from the signatures of Foreign Minister Mme Nguyen Thi Binh and

Foreign Minister Nguyen Duy Trinh. More recently, at the Conference of Non-Aligned Countries held in Algiers, while the suit brought by one side [Saigon] was simply ignored, the other side was recognized by the conference in its final resolution as the only representative of the people of South Viet Nam. Large numbers of countries attending the Algiers Conference did not hesitate to openly align with the other side. That is the cause for real trouble and disquietude for one side.

d) The Paris Agreements could only show its full significance if it finally led to a political settlement for South Viet Nam: that is through a general election and one to be held in such conditions as to ensure the minimum of fairness. Of course, such an election cannot be a repetition of the 91% and 96% model of two years ago (2). Neither can it be the strict compliance with the order 1, 2, 3, 4, as was the case in the recent elections (3).

The other side [the PRG] cannot resign itself to accept a balance of forces in which it would be in a position similar to that of General Duong Van Minh, Brigadier General Nguyen Cao Ky [presidential candidates]

or President Nguyen Van Huynh. Huynh was edged out of the chairmanship of the Saigon Senate during the 1973 elections because of his opposition to Thieu. If there is an election at all, it must be a fair and serious one, at least to a relative degree. But such an election is to be feared by one side alone. Not just because it might bring a majority of votes to the other side. Rather it is the apprehension of any correct election, even with the presumption that it would only give a modest percentage to the other side [the PRG]. Let's suppose that, for one reason or another, the other side only gets 20% of the votes. But the point is that this side, even though it drinks a lot of whisky to keep up its spirits, is very unlikely to get more than 20%. The remaining 60% would perhaps be scattered to persons of all tendencies in the Third Force. On the other hand, it is to be noted that while the other side might be prepared to accept such a result since it has all the capability of strictly abiding by the rules of fair play and also has time working in its favour, the only option for one side is to wage a political struggle through the ballot boxes which, using police clubs and prison locks, would give it 94-36 per cent of the returns.

Which Side Is Still Trying to Wreck the Paris Agreement?

In such a situation, right after the signing of the Paris Agreement, no prophet was needed to say which side would try to block its implementation.

And what has happened over the past six months and more did not differ much from what was predicted. Even without divine perception, any man in the street can clearly see which side has brazenly and continually violated the Paris Agreement. We can easily make the following observations:

— On the whole, the violation of the Paris Agreement by one side [Saigon] is not a self-defence, a reaction, an act of retaliation or an occasional error or miscalculation, but a policy and an undertaking, as shown by President Thieu's address to the police commanders right after the cease-fire took effect. He said notably: "Ignore all these agreements... as I did on dozens of occasions following the

Geneva Agreements. There is nothing to worry about." Or the assertion on the morning of November 9 by Prime Minister Khieu: "The Paris Agreement is even worse than an act of marriage."

No doubt, everyone else, including Mme Thieu and Mme Khieu, could hardly agree with Prime Minister Khieu when he listed the act of marriage among undesirable papers. But the significance of this "historic" -- again "historic" -- pronouncement becomes clear with the following explanation by its author: "An act of marriage still has some binding power on the husband and the wife whereas the Paris Agreement does in no way bind us to the Communists."

More concretely:

a) As for the military provisions (Chapter II of the Paris Agreement), although foreign journalists are not allowed to enter areas where hostilities are

taking place because the government of one side [Saigon], is anxious for their safety, fearing that stray bullets may hit them, anyone who has spent a night at a district town has heard the guns thundering all night long. Are they fired into the air? And any soldier and officer out on an operation can explain to us what the phrase "defending the security of the territory" means.

b) The picture becomes clearer when we examine the provisions directly concerning the people. The Third Force is recognized in Article 12 of the Paris Agreement, but so far it has been denied by one side. And nothing can be more cynical. For instance, on the occasion of the recent release of Mme Ngo Ba Thanh who had been denied freedom for more than two years, the other side asserted in unambiguous terms that the Third Force is legal, whereas one side continues to claim loudly that there is no such force (4). In any case, the side who recognizes the Third Force is in a position conformable with the Paris Agreement and the tendency of national concord and reconciliation which is more necessary to this land than ever before. Then as regards the problem of political prisoners, the serious, if not ridiculous, contradictions are even more glaring. "There are no political prisoners in South Viet Nam." This can only mean that this side has taken great pains to remake piles of dossiers and to do it in such a hurry that it has not even had time to cross out the letters CT [*Chinh Tri*, political] in the prison number of the prisoners as is the case of Nguyen Viet Tuan, Chairman of the Holy Labour Movement whose "release certificate" still bears the word CT in big letters. And it has been unable to think of any other things to charge the prisoners with, except the formulas "undesirable elements" and "unauthorized formation of political parties" or "lack of identity cards." But a report of *Viet Tan Na* [*Viet Nam Press* — press agency of the Saigon administration] let the cat out of the bag on September 27, 1973 when it quoted the so-called report issued by an International Red Cross delegation after visiting "communist prisoners on criminal charges." This is a really strange but also very effective formula: the Paris Agreement has automatically neutralized Article 4 of the Constitution

[of the Saigon regime], and since it dares neither openly recognize this hard truth, nor imprison the communists just because they are communists, one side [Saigon] has had to invent this monstrous formula: "communist prisoners on criminal charges." If against the communists fraud has had to be used, everything is possible with regard to the other opposition parties and segments. As for the treatment of political prisoners, it is a universally known fact. In the end, the democratic freedoms of the people mentioned in Article 11 of the Agreement

share the same fate. While anywhere else, such rights are considered as inalienable human rights, one side is brazenly transforming them into a price to bargain with the other side. We are used to hear such arguments as this: "The other side must do this and that if we are to allow the exercise of democratic freedoms." So far we have had no cases of hijacking in Viet Nam. But with such arguments, is it not true that one side has arrogantly turned tens of millions of the people in the areas under its control into a sort of hostage?

The Present Realities

HOWEVER the present realities are making it more and more difficult for one side to play its old tricks of sabotage.

If one side continues indefinitely its acts of sabotage, especially in the military field, at a certain point when the other side sees no more hope of arriving at a political solution as foreseen in the Paris Agreement, it must react and react strongly. In plain words, war will flare up again. This is what one side is looking for... in order to cry for more foreign military aid. But this is a stupid game which only desperate men are tempted to play. The United States, however loyal it may be to one side and to whatever extent it may be tempted to continue its policy of interfering in the affairs of Viet Nam, cannot order a more massive and heavier intervention than in the past when 500,000 US soldiers were trampling on the soil of South Viet Nam, or as in late 1972. The other side which has withstood such an onslaught will only be in a stronger military position, to say the least. The game will be even more risky now that the world situation has convincingly proved that, even though imperialism will never let go off its hold on any country out of kindness, the United States, as a result of its criminal and useless intervention in Indochina, has found itself sinking more and more into the quagmire of internal crises and contradictions. Nixon, who is hard put to disengage himself from this tangle, would not be foolish enough to take upon himself the additional task of pulling all these different Lon Nols out of the fire. There has been one indication after another of this. While the US Congress was wrangling over the military

aid bill, the US forces were ordered to stop bombing Phnom Penh as from August 15. Then, just over one month later, US forces rolled up their flag in Nam Phong and the last 2,100 US marines packed up and left Thailand.

Added to this is the increasing dislocation of the economy of South Viet Nam to which no country dares offer any remedy. France, West Germany, Japan... all of them have made a lot of promises but in the end all have declared the postponement of their investments in [South] Viet Nam. This is because they want to avoid the bad reputation that comes from having allied with and abetted a dictatorial and repressive regime and also because they are reluctant to engage in any venture when there is no political settlement in sight in South Viet Nam.

That is why one side [Saigon], will have to accept the inevitable even against its will. It will have to embark on the road of accepting the political solution provided for by the Paris Agreement. Because there is no alternative possible except... a special plane, to take it out of here.

(1) *Thieu's statement.*

(2) *Thieu's one-man presidential "election" farce of 1971.*

(3) *The supplementary election to the Saigon "Senate" in 1973, in which only pro-Thieu candidates stood for election.*

(4) *The pro-Thieu daily Dan Chu (Democracy) of May 23, 1974 wrote: "The third force is a puppet of the puppets; they are either fools or traitors."*

The *hat cheo*

Song of Oars

(The People Are Telling Their Own Story)

In spring, the season of village rejoicings, or on moonlit nights when the harvest is over, a call-drum throws the countryside of the Red River delta into a ferment. It is the *trong cheo*, a small drum used in the popular sung theatre of Viet Nam known as the *hat cheo*, a rudimentary form of which is the *cheo san dinh*, the *cheo* performed in the courtyard of the *dinh*, or communal house with its typically Vietnamese architecture. Leaving their mortars, pestles and huskers, their spinning wheels and looms, or, in the riverside villages, their fishing-baskets and nets, young and old, men and women hurry to the familiar *dinh*. There they find the crowded scene of a feast day. While the *tuong*, classical theatre, or the *cai luong*, renovated theatre, requires a regular stage, the *cheo san dinh* is performed in the open air. A mat is spread on the bare ground and this forms the stage. The only decor is a small case, the one which holds the company's belongings during its wanderings in the countryside. Assisted by acting and imagination, this scenery will suit every dramatic situation. The spectators are also on the ground around three sides of the mat, close

enough to the actors to touch them. And so, very naturally, the two sides exchange impromptu dialogues which show peasant verve at its best. The *cheo san dinh* is more than a show. It is the people who gather and tell themselves their own story.

Is it simply artistic enjoyment that calls these actors-spectators, to its sanctuary? The little buffalo-boy plays his bamboo flute alone for hours on end, sitting on the back of his beast. At home in the evenings while the family is busy with the interminable jobs which are part of country life the young people will sing to their heart's content. It is not the *cheo* play itself which attracts this large audience to the *dinh*. It is also a yearning for the primitive communal life awakened by the rhythm of that drum which seems to have a soul—an imperious rhythm with an emotional content which is always renewed because it springs from life itself. An echo of that Ngoc Lu drum of heroic destiny—at the same time a musical instrument to invoke rains or sound village alerts in time of flood, a cauldron specifically designed for popular feasts and an article exchange which could buy whole herds of

cattle—it has always beaten victorious charges against the terrified aggressor. Such high deeds will be long remembered by popular gratitude.

As a spontaneous theatrical manifestation of the masses, the *cheo* may date back to the dawn of our nation, with a prehistory of the time when the first inhabitants of Van Lang had to fight before a hostile nature and when the freaks of the still untamed Red River used for a long time to compel the peasants of the delta to keep ready their oars and boats. This agricultural life, bound to rivers and water-sides is shown in the Dong Son drums—such as the famous Ngoc Lu—which date back many millennia; and bear designs of houses on stilts, boats and rowers by the side of *khen* (1) players and rice pounders. It is shown by those rituals still preserved in many a delta region in which boating songs are chanted to accompany a sham water voyage or real rower dances. In Son Tay there is a popular festival called *hat hoi Re* which is performed once in every 36 years and includes a boat race performed with songs. The mystical piece *cheo Trai Ho*, one of the most ancient pieces of

classical *cheo* which is still performed today in Bac Ninh, a province renowned for its folk singing known as *quan ho*, depicts the construction of a funeral boat which, in popular belief, would take the deceased to the other world (2). Facts such as these may

suggest that the *hat cheo*, the song of oars, should be linked with a very old riverain culture, and that a primitive form of *cheo* was practised before the name itself existed and was as old as the Vietnamese community itself (3).

A People Tells Its Story

Created by peasants, deeply attached to their ancestral land, and throughout history the masters of their villages, the *cheo* has always lived in the midst of the people and by the people, depicting their hard existence and their aspiration to liberty and peace, work and culture. Drawing their plots from legends (*Tu Thuc nhap Thien Thai* — Tu Thuc Ventures into Paradise), Buddhist mythology (*Quan Am Thi Kinh* — Deification of Thi Kinh), popular tales (*Kim Nham*, *Chu Mai Than*, *Luu Binh Duong Le*, *Truong Vien*) these peasant-actors, who were often scholars as well, would bring onto the scene bits and pieces of their own lives. Like the other dramatic games in Viet Nam, the *cheo* reflects the morality and the feelings of a people. While the classical *tuong* tries to remain orthodox by chanting the stories of national heroes and the Confucian teachings of faithfulness towards the king and is quite prepared to borrow its dramatic personae from the Chinese classics and while the *cai luong* is often too languid, better suited to a city audience, the *cheo* as a peasant show and a mirror of the people's soul prefers to treat questions of human destiny, especially the condition of simple folk including women. The classical *cheo* plays known under their literary names *Quan Am Thi Kinh*, *Kim Nham*, *Luu Binh Duong Le*, *Truong Vien*,... are more than "tableaux." They are so many indictments of the feudal regime in which it is the woman, the first victim, who stands as accuser.

What is more moving and also more symbolic of the past sufferings of the Vietnamese woman than the drama of Thi Kinh? A poor peasant girl, she married Thien Si who belongs to a rich family. She loves him like all the women in this country know how to love their husbands: they are affectionate and submissive. It is in the early days of their union. One evening, the young man falls into a light sleep while alone with his wife. Discovering on his chin a hair growing the wrong way, she decides to cut it with a razor. He wakes up and takes fright at



the sight of the weapon. Appearances are against her. Her mother-in-law shouts that it is a premeditated attempt. In despair Thi Kinh devotes herself to Buddha. We next see her in the pagoda disguised as a young bonze. A coquette, Thi Mau, falls in love with her. Because her love is not returned — perhaps also as a revolt against her parents' calculations of a suitable match — Thi Mau gives herself to a boor, Thang No, becomes pregnant and charges Thi Kinh with the

misdeed. The latter once more resigns herself to her fate. Turned away from the holy place, she has to take care of Thi Mau's baby. She will look after it for three years by going from hut to hut, asking nursing mothers to give it their breasts. Her innocence is only disclosed at her death — out of exhaustion — and she becomes the deity *Quan Am*, the Goddess of slandered innocence and love.

Kim Nham is the tragedy of a woman who is a victim to feudal customs of polygamy, and above all to the immorality of mandarinism. Suy Van, the wife of Kim Nham, a young scholar, longs for a normal and happy married life. But her man, ambitious and lewd, only thinks of honours and concubines. In order to free herself from this odious husband, Suy Van feigns madness, but falls a prey to Tran Phuong, a Don Juan. In a frenzy, she drowns herself.

If the ending of *Luu Binh Duong Le* seems to be happy the woman is none the less put to a hard trial. What a delicate mission is committed to Chau Long by her polygamous husband to live with a dissolute man and help him reform! She comes to Luu Binh at a moment when, ruined by his escapades, he has been humiliated by Duong Le. She wins his confidence, and urges him to study and enter the mandarin competitions. She will keep him by spinning and weaving like a loving wife. During three years she has to calm down the ardour of this man who is conquered by her charm as well as by her intelligence and her virtue. She will carry out her task with honour.

In *Truong Vien*, it is only by unprecedented efforts at self-denial that the woman lost in a society full of snares, reaches a happy end. Thi Phuong, a mandarin's daughter, is married to a poor, intelligent and noble peasant. Troubles break out. The young man becomes a soldier. The war

lasts 18 years, Thi Phuong will go through many misfortunes, falling successively into the claws of a tiger, a demon and a local genie each time sacrificing herself to save her mother-in-law before rediscovering her husband who in the meantime has risen to become a general...

These are so many creations of the people's genius, engraved for ever on the national culture by their humanism and their social content. And these examples of suffering and heroism, abnegation and humanity make the Vietnamese woman as represented in the *cheo* into an incarnation of this nation's traditional virtues including that thirst for liberty and happiness which has always been at the bottom of all this country's great historical uprisings.

This picture of ancient Viet Nam shown in the *cheo*, a most realistic art, would be incomplete without the *he cheo* the "painted faces." Bringing a gay note to the tragedies of a Thi Kinh, a Suy Van or a Thi Phuong, they continue the indictment of feudal society. They are dressed in droll costumes and on their smutty faces may be seen mobile moustaches which increase the comical effect. The *he cheo* belongs

to various conditions of life: soothsayer, geomancer, innkeeper, village teacher, old drunkard, scribe, depraved functionary, mandarin's son, footman. A hundred different types who make you laugh and above all reflect less because of their contortions and grimaces than through their burning logic. Whether he makes himself or others into a laughing-stock the *he cheo*'s killing satire is most particularly directed against the old society whose evils and vices he stigmatizes. And so the scene showing a village court in *Quan An Thi Kinh* presents those who are supposed to dispense justice as dumb, deaf

and blind!

The *he cheo*'s farcical repartees and side-splitting tricks — the "Ode to Joy" in which laughter fuses with tears — are in fact the revenge of the peasant who uses this role as a pretext to accuse, denounce and curse the exploiters and depraved, to undermine the arrogance of the great while taking up the defence of the humble, and commiserating with his own fate. And always, with this wise and understanding humanism which is the basis of popular optimism, this confidence in the triumph of Righteousness and Justice, and one might add, in the future of the nation.

The Cheo Dance, Direct Expression of Dramatic Emotion

By its very origin, the *cheo* is a danced theatre. In the classical *cheo* pieces, dramatic emotions



and thoughts are rendered not only by singing, but also, and perhaps especially, by dancing conceived as a sophisticated

form of mime. This choreographic character determines, so to say, the construction of the play into "episodic narratives" in which dancing and singing develop naturally and the creativity of the actors is able to play its part. Suy Van dancing her anguish, Thi Mau dancing her concupiscence, Chau Long looking after her household chores, as well as the exultation of the old drunkard or of the staff-bearer *he*, provide the opportunity for elaborate choreographies which reproduce many village dances and images of country life: *Hoi mua* (harvest festival), *Gat lua* (harvesting), *Hai dau* (gathering mulberries), *Xe to det vai* (spinning and weaving), *Mua quat* (fan dance), *Mua non* (hat dance), *Mua gay* (stick dance).



These contain most of the characteristic elements of the Vietnamese traditional dance. A light, very terse evolution in both steps and gestures which are always danced and never realistic. The dance steps are always performed with the heel touching the ground. Without swinging the body, a displacement may often be by the feet alone. The arms and hands which are called to depict states of mind and also the surrounding atmosphere denote a grace all the more natural as it is the result of a careful training. The fingers open and close one after another like "flower petals." With or without the inseparable folding paper fan, it is so subtle that the least gesture reveals a state of mind. And the stylization is so elaborate that the attitude of the character can be understood even when seen from afar.

Most of the time, dancing, singing and mimicry are simultaneous parts of the dramatic performance. The presentation of the internal being gains by this without causing any prejudice to plastic beauty. This happy synthesis may explain why the dances of the delta which at the beginning as is proved by data from archaeology and folklore

A dance in a modern cheo play Tinh Rung (Love of the Forests).



were very likely as flourishing as those of the mountainous areas, afterwards virtually disappeared as an independent genre to become incorporated into the *cheo* and the other traditional theatres.

The Cheo Song, an Intimate Alliance of Music and Poetry

The music of *cheo*, one of the richest in Vietnamese folklore, contains several hundred cantilenae which by their melodic and modal workmanship are as many original compositions. Their formal characteristics are the drawing out of the same syllable over many notes (a common feature of Vietnamese popular airs), and the frequent vocalization on the vowel 'i' [i:] (peculiar to the *cheo*). But the *cheo* melodies differ from the other folk airs in the sense that they are specifically created for theatrical performances. So, the *sap* is intended for joyful situations and the *van* to sad

circumstances, while the *noi su* or recitations have no definite rhythm. Traditionally new melodies should be created for new emotional states and so the repertoire is constantly being enriched.

Declaimed sentences are included in the text. The passage from singing to declamation and back again, is prepared for by the intonation of Vietnamese speech itself which is judiciously put into account. Songs and declaimed words are written in a very poetical language, most often rhymed and strewn with proverbs and sayings which further enhance their flavour.

Cheo singing is so deeply im-

pregnated in the people's soul that in provinces classified as the home of *cheo noi* (pure *cheo*), Thai Binh, Nam Ha, Hai Hung, Ha Tay... the children learn it at their mothers' knees. As for village actors, they will easily maintain many roles, so familiar they are with the melodies, words and gestures. Many regions still hold *cheo* singing competitions, popular feasts in which the musicality of a peasantry sensitive to the arts of peace is given free rein. The competitors will make use of national forms of poetry (especially of alternate verses of 6 and 8 feet known as *luc bat*) or of other folk airs which are then modulated in the style of *cheo*. Professionals and amateurs will vie with one another in intellectual initiatives, sentimental outpourings and vocal improvising which helps to diffuse and enrich the musical and literary stock still further.

The *cheo* orchestra included at its beginning only one singing instrument, the *nhi* (two-stringed violin), to sustain the actors' voices. With the evolution of the *cheo* towards its professional form, other instruments were added, the *nguyet* (moon-shaped guitar), *sao* and *tien* (bamboo flutes), *tranh* (16-stringed zither). In the tradition of *cheo noi*, each *cheo* performance is introduced by a tutti of percussion, in which the *trong cheo* above-mentioned, another drum called *trong com* (because of the rice cake stuck at one of its heads as a means of determining

the tone), the *thanh la* or cymbal, the *liu canh* or castanets, the *mo* or rattle, engage in frantic rivalry. The crowd is silenced by this rhythmic overture and the play begins.

The player of *trong cheo*, a connoisseur, if not the foremost notable of the village, would beat on his instrument with a particular symbolism (both on the skin and the wooden wall) to convey satisfaction or displeasure. And according to the drum's appreciations, the stage manager—or the jury in competitions—would score by using small bamboo plates which were then counted when the actors were paid.

An Art Which Is Forging Ahead

The nature of the *cheo*, its content and form cause it to be more than just a favourite amusement of the masses. It is a weapon in the people's hands for the defence of their rights.

In the 10th century, when Vietnamese feudal society was still in its ascending phase, the patriotic King Dinh Tien Hoang had appointed a singer, Pham Thi Tran, as the Court's Lady Expert in charge of the song and dance training of artistic companies belonging to the king's army: this happened soon after this maker of national unity had restored peace in 967 by putting an end to feudal rivalries which had broken out following the reconquest of independence after ten centuries of foreign domination. This royal favour did not last long. As feudal reaction intensified, peasant rebellions became more frequent. This movement was reflected in the *cheo*, where the people could always raise their voice, especially in the scathing criticisms of the *he cheo*. This soon brought down the hatred of the feudal rulers on this popular art. From the XVth century in the period of the decline of the Le dynasty, the *cheo* was banned from court entertain-

ments. Later on, the poet Dao Duy Tu was excluded from mandarin competitions because of the origin of his mother, a *cheo* actress. By that time, musicians and artists were relegated to the lowest ranks of the feudal hierarchy. Only popular fervour was to save the *cheo* from oblivion.



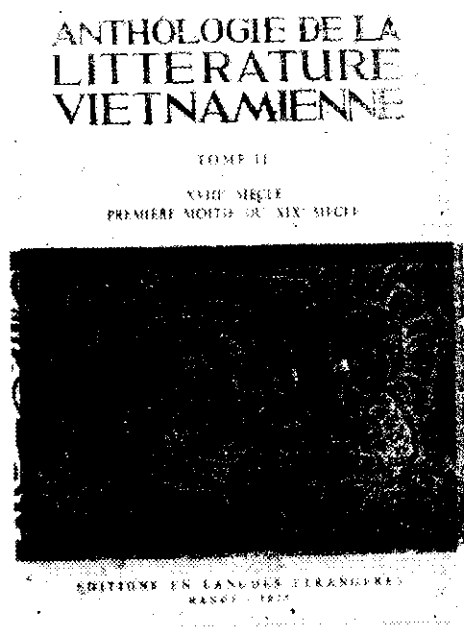
Not until the August Revolution could theatre, particularly the *cheo*, experience a true revival. Already during the period of illegality, revolutionary militants, among them many present-day leaders of the DRVN, had at

several times and especially in colonialist jails, appealed to popular songs and *cheo* to activate their work of patriotic education. In the part of the *he cheo*, they would be able to castigate at will the French colonialists' perfidy and cynicism. Right after its installation, the people's power was intent on restoring national traditions. Stimulated by the new regime, the few popular singers who had survived the night of feudal colonialism, those pious upholders of the cultural heritage inspired by their patriotism as well as by their love of *cheo*, fervently devoted themselves to rescuscitating this art threatened with disappearance.⁽⁴⁾ The first *cheo* companies set up right at the beginning of the 1945-1954 resistance came into being around such nuclei as Trum Thinh (1883-1973), Ca Tam (1887-1972), Nam Ngu (born in 1895), Hoa Tam together with other veterans of *cheo* such as Cu Mam, Cu Pham, Cu Phu (Cu is a word conveying respect to old age)... It is also thanks to these masters of *cheo* that only a short time after peace was restored the *School of Traditional Theatre* could open its doors in 1959.

A galaxy of workers in *cheo* had trained themselves and, in their turn, became active propagators and teachers. They are the actresses: Diu Huong, Kim Lien, Bach Tuyet, Diem Loc, Minh Toan, Thanh Huong, Van Chi, Thuy Hien, Thanh Tram, Kim Quy; the actors: Chu Van Thuc (who ended up as stage-manager), Bui Trong Dang, Dang Chuyen, Quang Huy, Van Khuong, Nuan Quan, Manh Thuong; the *he cheo*: Manh Tuan, Van Phiem, Vu Huy, Manh Ha, Thuy Nga; the playwrights and dramatic critics: Han The Du, Tran Bang, Ha Van Cau, Tran Vuong, Hoai Giao, Nguyen Binh, Tran Huyen Tran, Long Chuong, Trung Phong, Viet Dung, Phan Tat Quang, Nguyen Duc Thuyet,

(Continued on page 30)

*Publication of the 2nd Volume of the Anthology
of Vietnamese Literature*



In his preface to a book on Vietnamese literature Pierre Abraham (1) wrote in 1961: "Here is a literature which we, Frenchmen, approach with anxious tenderness. It is a battlefield, isn't it?"

Inasmuch as no work escapes the social imperatives of its era, one can regard all literature as part of a merciless struggle between the old and the new. This is especially true for this second volume of the *Anthologie de la Littérature Vietnamienne* (2) covering the 18th and the first half of the 19th century.

In Viet Nam that period was characterized by a deep crisis in decadent feudal society. Civil wars and the rapacity of the landlords, mandarins and village notables, brought famine to the population. A succession of peasant uprisings broke out. Most famous of these was that of the Tay Son in 1771 whose leader, Nguyen Hue, became King Quang Trung and carried out a number of reforms in favour of the peasants and the development of trade and handicrafts. Besides this, new social strata were appearing who promoted the introduction of new ideas. Finally there was the spectacle of a monarchy torn by plots, soaked in luxury and corruption, compromising the omnipotence of Confucian orthodoxy with its principle of absolute fidelity to the monarch.

By weakening, little by little, the yoke of Confucianism, this crisis brought about a brilliant flowering culture and literature.

A Page of Unending Song

Criticisms of the feudal society and a desire for happiness underlie most of the works whether by the people or the scholars.

These are new and revolutionary themes after several centuries of a morality which required absolute respect to royalty, the sacrifice of the individual to the regime and total submission to the will of the father.

In my opinion it is in the popular novels that the social reality of this period is most truly and vividly reflected. The organization of the Vietnamese commune was deeply rooted. The villages, solid social units, remained autonomous in relation to the central administration. "King's law yields to village custom." Thus, escaping from the trammels of Chinese culture and the rites of the official religions (3) which, for twenty centuries, had paralysed the ruling classes and scholar-gentry, the country folk defended national customs and traditions and preserved the folklore heritage of the past. They gave expression to their life and sentiments in tales which were handed down from generation to generation by word of mouth, like the *chansons de geste* of medieval France. As an antithesis to the gloomy nostalgia, or the resigned melancholy of some scholars, folk literature extols rice and the harvests, the attachment of the peasants to their land, the struggle against a harsh nature, the love between the wood-cutter and the princess, the epic of legendary heroes...

The Court, the mandarins and notables are cursed, and luxury and corruption denounced with ferocious humour. Eternal social truths—the complete submission of the subject to the sovereign, the son to his father, the woman to her husband—are overturned. The rebel is glorified and free choice in marriage affirmed. It is worth noting that folk tales invariably have a happy ending. Through the omnipresence of genies, demons and gods praise is given to the man who, by dint of audacity and perseverance, becomes master of his destiny.

Folk literature gave Vietnamese woman a role which corresponded to that which she held in economic and social life. In fact, in production as well as in the family, the wife replaced her husband who most of the time was away from the village because of uprisings, civil wars, corvées for the king, building of dykes, etc.

Songs and stories praised her virtue, faithfulness, courage and good humour. Thus the beautiful Ngoc Hoa, daughter of a wealthy mandarin, marries Pham Tai—a poor man—something which is in itself a revolution. The intrigues of a jealous suitor compel her to join the royal harem. In despair, Pham Tai retires to a pagoda:

*I bow to the wishes of the King
It is only my sorrowful fate that I blame
The God of marriage did not bless me...*

But Ngoc Hoa refuses to resign herself to her fate:

*The Harem has no lack of beauties
Why impose your law on a married woman?
If you torment my rosy cheeks
I would rather die than betray my husband.*

The heroine of *Hoang Truon* scours the seas in search of her husband. Refusing to submit to destiny, she overcomes thousands of difficulties so as to reconquer and preserve her happiness...

This homage goes beyond the purely folk literature, and is found firstly in the works of female writers, especially in the remarkable poems of Ho Xuan Huong, not only a strong indictment against the treatment of women, but also a pleading for freedom of choice in marriage, the right to be an unmarried mother, the equality of the sexes.

*Ah! If could shed my skin to turn into a man,
To become a hero would be child's play.*

It is also in the marvellous poem *Kien*, large excerpts of which can be read here...

This is but one aspect—though a striking one—of a book which is on the whole astonishingly near and accessible—doubtless because many authors, who at that time joined the people in a common struggle and shared their lot, have borrowed the vivacity and simplicity of their language.

It is a book which is attractive and precious by its diversity and richness, also by the challenge inherent in its publication in Hanoi in 1973, and finally by the light it sheds on the present-day reality.

It is a page of the Vietnamese people's unending song of hope and action:

*I will pour wine slowly cup by cup,
I will tenderly say my verses in a murmur
of alcohol, of poetry.
Many a time we shall get drunk.
And we shall live side by side till the end
of our days,
Happiness will wash away the years of sorrow
and endless waiting
And, carefully protecting our love,
We shall enjoy the blessings of peace
Oh! husband, it is longing for a prompt return
That I say these verses full of tenderness.*

JULIANE WASMES

- (1) Editor in Chief of "Europe."
- (2) Foreign Languages Publishing House, Hanoi 1973.
- (3) Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism.

BOOK NOTES

— **Tieng Sam Dien Bien** (The Thunderbolt of Dien Bien); People's Army Publishing House, Hanoi, 1974, 13 × 18.8, 404 pages.

A collection of articles, book excerpts and studies published all over the world dealing with the victory of Dien Bien Phu, its evolution and impact.

— **Nhung ky niem ve Bac** (Memoirs of Uncle Ho), Viet Bac Publishing House, Bac Thai, 1973, 13 × 19, 144 pages.

16 cadres of minority nationalities from the Viet Bac Autonomous Region (north of the DRVN) write reminiscences of their meetings with President Ho Chi Minh.

— **Nhung nguoi cung tuyen** (People of the Same Frontline) by Hai Ho, People's

Army Publishing House, Hanoi, 1973, 13 × 18.8, 384 pages.

A novel depicting the activities of the fighters in a military liaison post on the Truong Son communication line in the thick of the war as they work to fulfil their task of transporting war material for the frontline in time.

— **Ao Trang** (White Robe), by Nguyen Van Bong, Youth Publishing House, Hanoi, 1973, 13 × 19, 218 pages.

The novel eulogizes the noble qualities of a progressive student whose activities take place among student circles in Saigon, and, after her arrest, in the puppet prisons.



The Hat Cheo-Song of Oars

(Continued from page 27)

Nguyen Thi Nhung; the scene-painter Nguyen Dich Ham; the choreographer Ho Ngoc Can; the musicians: Hoang Kieu (musicologist), Bui Duc Hanh, Ngoc Phan (composers), Tran Vinh (tieu-player) Van Phuc (nhi-player) The Tuyen (nguyen-player)...

Most of the traditional *cheo* stock has been revived for the stage and new plays written in the style of the original art. The dramatic matter is always drawn from tales and legends. *Tam Cam*, the Vietnamese Cinderella; *Thach Sanh*, the people's Saviour; *An Tiem*, the legend of the watermelon; *Lo nuoc than*, the magic pitcher, from historical subjects relating to the resistance of the Tran dynasty against the Mongol invasion in the 13th century, such as *Pham Ngu Lao* and *Tran Quoc Tuan* and the drama experienced by a concubine of King Minh Mang, *Co Son*, at the start of the 15th century; many instances of the revolutionary struggle in the years 30's with *Co gai song Lam* (The Maiden of the Lam River), *Phien da* (The Stone Slab), *Ngươi con gái sông Cam* (The Young Girl of the Cam River). Over 50 *cheo* plays are devoted to the people's State dealing with the agrarian reform in *Chi Tam* and *Chi Dan* (built on a realistic novel by Ngo Tat To), the co-operative movement in *Con tran hai nha* (One Buffalo for Two Families), the resistance against US aggression in *Duong ve tran dia* (On the Way Back to the Front), *Nguyen Viet Xuan* (after a hero of this name), *Co giai phong* (The Liberating Girl), and the construction of socialism in *Soi to vang* (The Gold Silk Thread), *Lan bien* (Encroaching on the Sea), *Ngươi Dao xuong nui* (The Dao Tribe Come

Down from their Mountains), *Tinh rung* (Love of Forests).

Thirty years of people's power have witnessed the emergence in North Viet Nam of 16 professional *cheo* companies, many of which date back to the first resistance, such as the *Central House*



of *Cheo*, the *Hanoi Cheo Company*, the *Hai Phong Cheo Company*. They bring their help to thousands of amateur ensembles set up in agricultural and handicraft co-operatives, factories and building sites, schools and administrative services.

From the delta plains, for a long time its favourite land, the *cheo* has conquered the cities and mountainous areas in North Viet Nam and later in Central and South Viet Nam, to become nowadays one of the most popular and representative manifestations of national cultural life. The modern *cheo* is still the people telling themselves their story—but a highly conscious people, who have taken in hands their own destiny and are all the more enamoured of liberty, independ-

ence and peace as they have been hardened in the crucible of nearly half a century of revolutionary struggle against the worst aggressors ever recorded in the history of mankind. The artistic festivals both professional and amateur, in which a place of honour is always reserved for the *cheo*, stands as proof to this. And the voice of *cheo* which in the gloomiest years of war always spoke out proudly and serenely has passed beyond the frontiers of this country, bringing to the world the artistic message of a traditional and revolutionary Viet Nam.

In the present historical phase when this ancient land of art and culture is meeting everywhere an unheard of enthusiasm, we may safely expect that the *cheo* theatre, like the other cultural activities, will experience a new flowering especially on the occasion of the 1975 festival, leading towards an accomplished operatic genre—the picture of a people and the synthesis of a national culture.

DAO TRONG TU

March 1974

(1) Bamboo pipe

(2) In 1961 at the village of Ngoc Khe, Thuy Nguyen district, Hai Phong, five tombs were discovered, each containing a coffin made of the trunk of a tree hollowed into a canoe (Historical Museum, Hanoi).

(3) Another different explanation tries to make the word *cheo* a derivative of *Trao* or *satire* so turning the *cheo* into an exclusively satirical genre.

(4) The great famine of 1945, generated by the French colonialists and the Japanese occupying forces on the eve of their collapse, caused the deaths of some two million people in the delta provinces among whom were most of the popular artists.

CHRONOLOGY

(Continued from page 32)

action (including 3 divisions and 3 brigades); 502 posts overrun, 102 aircraft down or burnt, 344 tanks and armoured cars destroyed, 635 vessels sunk or damaged, 210,000 people liberated.

3 - The Foreign Ministry of the RSVN declared that all the natural resources in South Viet Nam, including oil, are the inviolable property of the South Vietnamese people. The Nguyen Van Thieu administration has no right whatever to represent the South Vietnamese people in conceding to foreign firms the right to exploit these resources; all acts aimed at making use of the Saigon administration concerning such concessions are violations of the interests of the Vietnamese people and will be energetically opposed.

-- By order of the Saigon authorities the puppet troops lobbed shells on Tan Hiep prison (Bien Hoa) causing many casualties among the prisoners, after which they laid the blame on the liberation troops.

4 - The fifth anniversary of the formation of the PRG was commemorated; at a meeting on this occasion the PRG reviewed the situation of South Viet Nam and laid down new political tasks for the South Vietnamese people and armed forces.

-- Thousands of college and school students held big demonstrations in Phnom Penh against the government and demanded that Lon Nol release 15 arrested teachers and students. The combat police attacked the demonstrators, killing a number of people, including the Minister and Vice-Minister of Education held by the students as hostages.

6 -- The Foreign Ministry of the DRVN issued a statement strongly condemning the US for increasing military and economic aid to Nguyen Van Thieu in order to allow him to prolong the war and cause tension in South Viet Nam.

-- At Thu Duc, Thieu declared: "The US only has to supply war material and the Republic of Viet Nam is ready to contribute the blood of the Vietnamese."

7 -- The DRVN National Assembly delegation headed by its Chairman, Truong Chinh, ended its friendship visit to Hungary begun on May 23, 1974.

-- The South Viet Nam Women's Delegation led by Mme Nguyen Thi Dinh, President of the South Viet Nam Liberation Women's Union, member of the Presidium of the South Viet Nam NFL, Deputy-Commander of the PLAF, ended its friendship visit to the Soviet Union. Mme Dinh was awarded the Lenin prize for her contribution to the strengthening of peace and friendship between nations.

-- Betraying the US commitment as a signatory to the Paris Agreement, Kissinger at the House of Representatives Foreign Relations Committee on June 4, and the Senate

Foreign Relations Committee on June 7, and at a press conference on June 6, made repeated statements defending the US policy of aggression and intervention in Viet Nam, and slandering the DRVN in order to justify the failure of the US to fulfil its promise to contribute to the healing of the war wounds of the DRVN.

-- In an engagement near Sihanoukville, the Cambodian patriotic forces captured an American lieutenant.

8 -- The *Bangkok Post* reported the Thai Foreign Minister Chatchai Chunhavan as saying: "We need the presence of the US as a bargaining and deterrent force."

-- After a concession made by the Saigon administration, in restoring some privileges and immunities to the PRG and DRVN military delegations, the PRG military delegation declared that it would return to the bipartite conference table.

10 -- Diplomatic relations between the Republic of South Viet Nam and the Malagasy Republic established.

-- On June 9 and 10, 1974 on orders from Nguyen Van Thieu hooligans attacked an anti-conscription demonstration of 300 bonzes at Kien Thanh town (Rach Gia province), killing 5 bonzes and injuring 17 others.

11 -- The 900 million-dollar aid to Saigon in the fiscal year 1974-75 was approved by the US Senate with a 46-45 majority.

12 -- RSVN Foreign Minister Nguyen Thi Binh attended, as an observer, the Conference of Heads of States and Governments of the Organization of African Unity, held in the capital of Somalia.

13 -- Owing to internal dissension, the Long Boret cabinet tendered its resignation. Long Boret was asked to form a new government.

14 -- Recognition of the RSVN by Mauritania. The two countries will establish diplomatic relations at ambassadorial level.

-- Ceremony held in Belgrade for the signing of an agreement on non-refundable economic aid granted by Yugoslavia to the PRG.

15 -- Truong Tien Dat, a Saigon senator, made known a letter demanding that Thieu sack six generals, two colonels and many officers of the Saigon army.

-- On the occasion of the first anniversary of the signing of the Joint Communiqué signed on June 13, 1973, and marking 16 months of implementing the Paris Agreement on Viet Nam, the PRG Foreign Ministry sent to members of the International Conference on Viet Nam, the International Commission and the UN Secretary, a note denouncing the continuation of US involvement and interference in the internal affairs of South Viet Nam and the serious sabotage of the Paris Agreement and the Joint Communiqué by the US.

CHRONOLOGY

(May 16 — June 15, 1974)

MAY

18 — The American Congress approved an additional credit of 49 million dollars as economic aid to Nguyen Van Thieu for the fiscal year 1973-1974.

19 — According to the Saigon *Dien Tin*, in the first 4 months of 1974, the Saigon administration seized 93,273 million piastres of taxes from the people, more than double the figure of the same period in 1973.

— The same paper also reported that factories for the manufacture of arms and ammunition will be built by Americans in South Viet Nam.

20 — Establishment of diplomatic relations at ambassadorial level between the RSVN and Guinea (Bissau).

— The PLAF attacked Nha Be fuel depots, 10 km southeast of Saigon, setting on fire 3 million litres of petrol.

21 — US Defense Secretary Schlesinger said that the US has a "natural commitment" to continue granting aid to the Republic of Viet Nam. That commitment requires the US to go on sending war material in sufficient quantities to the "Republic of Viet Nam."

— The Sanya Thammasak cabinet in Thailand tendered its resignation.

22 — Setting up of a permanent PRG delegation in France.

— The Saigon newspaper *Dong Phuong*: W. Colby has come to Saigon for the fifth time since his appointment as head of the CIA.

— The US House of Representatives voted to maintain the military aid granted to the Saigon administration in 1974-75 at the level of 1,126 million dollars.

23 — The DRVN National Assembly delegation headed by its Chairman, Truong Chinh, member of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Viet Nam Workers' Party, ended its visit to Czechoslovakia, begun on May 16, 1974.

— According to the Saigon paper *Song Than*, the Saigon administration obtained 34.4 million dollars from the 2nd auction of oil prospecting rights, in which several capitalist companies took part.

— The Pathet Lao news agency denounced Saigon for sending 5 helicopters carrying commandos to areas controlled by the patriotic forces in Southern Laos.

24 — With an additional credit of 500,000 dollars, US economic aid to Lon Nol in 1973-74 amounted to 272.3 million dollars.

25 — Thieu sacked Nguyen Van Ngan, his special aide for political and economic affairs, one of the founders of Thieu's Democratic Party.

26 — The spokesman of the Foreign Ministry of the RSVN issued a statement on the threat by Indonesia and Iran to withdraw from the International Commission. He commented that it was up to them to make such a decision, but so long as they remained as members of the IC, they should act according to the functions and tasks assigned to them by the Paris Agreement and its protocols.

27 — UPI: In the encroachment operation against the Ben Cat area, the Saigon authorities used F-5E jets manned by Americans for the first time to attack the civilian population.

— The National Political Council of Coalition in Laos approved the political programme presented by Prince Souphanouvong, its Chairman, on the "building of the Kingdom of Laos into a peaceful, independent, neutral, democratic and prosperous country."

— Graham Martin, US Ambassador to South Viet Nam, urged the US Congress to grant aid to Saigon; he declared that the US would not let down South Viet Nam.

30 — The spokesman of the Central Committee of the Lao Patriotic Front issued a statement strongly denouncing the US and Thailand for using Thailand as a base for intervention and aggression against Laos and other Indochinese countries.

31 — Twelve oil companies from the US, Canada, Britain and Japan joined the number of firms prospecting for oil on the South Viet Nam continental shelf.

— Thieu held a conference with his Chief of Staff and the commanders of the four Army Areas. He called for economy in the use of munitions and fuel, and "prosecuting the war in a small way" in order to cope with the "not so bright" prospects of US aid.

— Sanya Thammasak, Premier of Thailand, announced his new cabinet composed of 14 ministers and 16 vice-ministers mostly from those who supported the policies of the outgoing Thammasak cabinet.

JUNE

1 — Big victories won by the Cambodian patriotic forces in the 1973-74 dry season (up to May 1974): 91,700 enemy troops put out of

(Continued on page 31)